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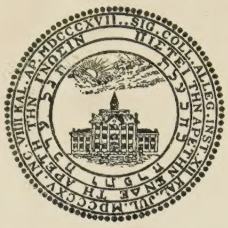

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THE MOTHER OF WASHINGTON

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THE MOTHER OF WASHINGTON

By Nancy Byrd Turner

IN COLLABORATION WITH SIDNEY GUNN

Hartford, Conn.: Edwin Valentine Mitchell

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1930

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TO NANCY HARRISON TURNER

A Virginia Mother

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THE MOTHER OF WASHINGTON

CHAPTER I

THERE is a remarkable strip of land down on the ocean shore of Virginia that for three hundred years has borne the name of the Northern Neck. It is the first of three peninsulas, counting downward, into which rivers and creeks have carved the coast—a long, narrow strip of land edged on the north by the Potomac River and on the south by the Rappahannock. Two centuries ago, when it was a crown grant to Lord Culpeper, that prince of landowners, it reached from the Blue Ridge Mountains to the Bay.

A notable Neck it is, too. Never in history perhaps have so much worth and valor come out of so small an area in so comparatively short a space of time. In the course of a few generations those little green acres have produced presidents, statesmen, and world-known warriors. It produced also, incidentally, their forebears. For example, on a certain November day, on the river edge of one of the lower counties that round from the Rappahannock into the Chesapeake, a child named Mary Ball was born, and this little girl was to produce in time directly or indirectly much of the glory of the

Northern Neck and of the rest of the land as well.

The great men of that region came slowly, as they were needed. Virginia took her time. First her settlers forged across doubtful seas to a strange shore, matched their strength against savages, hewed out homes, and lighted firesides. Then for decades their descendants carried on through immeasurable hardships, going forward under their own steam, as it were, since at a distance of three thousand miles there could be little leaning on the mother country. Every ounce of their innate courage and common sense was needed, and they met the challenge magnificently. But the new land was over a century old, and there had been a long and peaceful interval, before the times called for a giant.

It is only in mythology, however, that giants spring forth full-armed on the spur of the moment. In actual life elaborate even though unconscious preparation is necessary. Virginia had been settled by men with the breath of freedom in their nostrils and with Magna Charta large in their racial memory. That such a people, out of touch with their homeland and cut off from their seat of government, should sooner or later have to face a tremendous crisis of some kind was inevitable. It was equally inevitable that they should deal with that crisis after the manner of their fathers. And with the subconscious but infallible foresight of a nation in the making, they fashioned as they went the material for their future need. When the hour struck, George Washington was ready—no accident, but the natural outcome of condi-

tions, influences, and other resistless factors that for hundreds of years had worked silently together to shape him for his time. "When the tale of bricks is doubled," runs an old proverb, "then comes Moses." It does not add, as it well might, that long before the clay was prepared for the bricks Moses himself had been drawing from the same earth, taking form slowly and surely for the day when he must deal with the doubling.

Another thing the proverb failed to note is that back of each Moses stands his mother, and that much of his ability to handle his special crisis derives from her. But that is the truth. The mother of George Washington, born Mary Ball in the county of Lancaster, Virginia, one November day of 1707, was as definitely the product of the past, and as certainly the stuff of the future Republic, as was her son.

Mary Ball opened her eyes casually enough, however, on Epping Forest, the home of her father, Colonel Joseph Ball, undisturbed by any sense of her own large significance. If the child had been consulted beforehand she could hardly have selected a more appropriate date and place for her coming. It was almost exactly on her country's hundredth birthday, and within about a hundred miles, as the crow flies, of the point where the first English settlers of America had landed. Moreover, it was high time at length that a woman made some telling mark on the world's records. Women had won, as yet, but small credit for the achievements of the race. Queen Isabella was to be taken into consideration, of course,—

the godmother of America, by the way,—and Queen Elizabeth,—its foster mother,—but Isabella was growing somewhat dim in retrospect, and Elizabeth, after all, had possessed the mind of a man, or so men said. The sex that was propitiatingly called fair had done very little, so far as was recognized, to further progress. The wives and daughters of the settlers baked and brewed industriously while their menfolk hewed, but it was the hewing that went into the records. They had other activities, also, such as the bearing and rearing of children, but neither did those win any laurels. Nevertheless these are, after all, this bearing and rearing, the oldest and most indispensable of occupations; and the newcomer, Mary Ball, was destined to give them a new lustre.

To be born on a fall day in the Northern Neck is an achievement all by itself,—in Virginia's banner season and in one of her finest sections. So that Colonel Joseph Ball's latest and last child had made an auspicious start even if she were to do nothing more for herself as time went on.

In those days babies came without fuss and feathers. This one probably received as much attention, after the first rites, as did any of her contemporaries in the surrounding plantations. Colonial families increased with such rabbit-like regularity that there was not much more excitement over a lying-in than over the making of an apple pie. Down on Corotoman River the children of "King" Carter, Lord Culpeper's agent in the North-

ern Neck, came so fast that he scarcely took the trouble to count them. At each birth, it is true, he busied himself with plans for a new manor-house somewhere on his broad domains, but for a man with his vast property holdings that was no great task. His own father, with five wives and a proportionate number of children, took his family responsibilities with equal poise.

So the small Mary, through whose instrumentality nations were to rock, was merely an episode in the daily life at Epping Forest. Her father and mother already had seven children by former marriages, and parenthood had come to mean more or less a matter of routine. All of the first group were grown when Mary was born, most of them married and with children of their own. At best the little girl must have been taken pretty much as a matter of course.

Her first breath was drawn in peaceful air, for she had come in an era of comparative calm. A few decades earlier, she might easily have lost her scalp; a few later, and at least her infant slumbers would have been stirred by divers excursions and alarums. In 1707 the Indian massacres that terrified the first settlers had dwindled, in the Northern Neck, to little more than scary legends told safely enough over bright evening fires. And on the other hand, the forces working for future wars were not active as yet. On the western border of settlement, and in New England, there was intermittent strife with Indian tribes and with scattered French explorers, but Eastern Virginia was tranquilly indifferent, as the pio-

neers frequently complained with bitterness, to trouble so far away.

As for affairs in Europe, news filtered slowly through from those far shores, and that which did come was only mildly disturbing. The new Americans received it with keen interest, to be sure, because for all their security at home they realized that in the long run their fortunes must rise and fall with the fortunes of Europe; they were still an integral part of England, in fact and in fealty, and England's fate was bound up with the shifting fate of the continental kingdoms. But at the same time they had abiding faith in the ability of their motherland to cope with all the rest of the countries put together.

This was exactly what England was trying to do. Peaceful at home, except for internal squabbles, with the glorious Revolution safely over and Anne complacent on her newly polished throne, the island had turned its expert attention to affairs on the mainland. The War of the Spanish Succession was in full swing, with Louis XIV striking to right and left, Spain in a turmoil, and Austria watching with angry apprehension. It was Austria that interfered most with the Grand Monarch's peace of mind. That country had grown at last into a power of no small importance and now stood threateningly in mid-Europe, one foot resting on the ruins of the Roman Empire and the other on the successful manipulation of the institution of matrimony—Austrian princelings having made, for generations, phenomenally brilliant political matches. Louis might swagger around

under his enormous wig and claim the earth, but there was more than that to be done if he would keep either his wig or his claim. So while he made faces at Austria and glanced with misgiving, now and then, at Peter the Great, swaying like an enormous bear on its hind legs, he feverishly endeavored to put a French prince on the Spanish throne. And England with equal earnestness strove to keep him from doing it.

The echoes that reached the colonists, therefore, were by no means musical. Still, there was not any sharply drawn issue, certainly nothing to threaten their own welfare; and so, though Virginians listened alertly enough, it was without any real alarm. There might be wars, but they were far away. In any case, battle and murder and sudden death were not the bugaboos two hundred years ago that they are today. Life was sweet, of course, and the law of self-preservation had many devoted adherents, but all things are comparative. The hair-raising tales that the first settlers had handed down to posterity made the opening of the eighteenth century seem a piping time of peace. Besides, England and France had always fought each other, the colonials argued, and England had always won. In point of fact, amiability between those two would have seemed more alarming than dissension—a state to signify imminent catastrophe, like the terrifying calm that precedes an earthquake. The fact that Louis's minions were constantly increasing in numbers at Virginia's western edge of settlement bothered Virginians slightly, in between seasons; but

after all, was not Queen Anne ruling over yonder, prim and Protestant and a tower of strength? Taken by and large, the times were fair. And down in the Northern Neck, where the cream of Virginia, rich and cool, had risen to the top, they were passing good.

When the youngest Ball took up her residence in lower Lancaster that fall day the land was steeped in an ancient beauty. However a country may alter as to history, politics, customs, even as to topography, its climate suffers scarcely any change. So that the look of the northern peninsula on that fall day is keen-etched for us and clear.

The date in November is not known with certainty; the twentieth has been named, but it may have been nearer the first of the month. Virginia autumn has a way of dallying, some years, and when it does the beauty of the countryside is almost startling. If the season in 1707 was a laggard one, then the newcomer must have drawn her first breath in surroundings of infinite loveliness. They may have held her up to the window to fetch it,—black mammies had all manner of queer devices,—and when they did she blinked out at a splendid panorama. For in early November of a "late" fall the foliage made a vast expanse of glory. All inland the color flamed: broad acres that today are cleared land burned with golden maple, russet oak, and crimson ash. Every copse and meadow was in color, every bush and border, with the sky above them deep in that peculiar silver-blue

that comes only once in the course of the seasons.

There were few roads in the entire length of the Neck, and those few, with the exception of the cedar-bordered road in to Corotoman, scarcely deserved the name, but they had to be broad enough to take the breadth of my Lord Culpeper's coach and of King Carter's great carriage; and wherever the highway crawled it was brightened that day by asters and hardy sumac and belated spikes of goldenrod. Frost had touched the persimmons and turned them sugar to the core; chestnuts, fully sweetened, came thudding down under the weight of their own ripeness. Now and then a raccoon or a fox crackled through crisp undergrowth looking for left-over wild grapes, or a deer brushed through the woods with a mighty scraping of brittle branches. Bobwhites called under brown bushes, and there was a pale-blue, spicy haze over everything. Here and there above the trees a column of smoke, standing thin and blue, marked the location of a manor-house.

There is something ineffable about autumn in the Old Dominion. Her sons and daughters wander off in their restlessness, but always they know that whatever happens they must have at least one more fall-time at home. Virginians felt the same way back in those old days. Joseph Ball did, for though he crossed the ocean again and again, he always made his way home. And his father did before him—old Colonel William Ball, who fought hard to keep the Stuarts in power and

then, after his exile, when they came back to the throne and he could easily have returned to England, stayed on in Virginia for the rest of his autumns.

The beauty of it all must have stirred Joseph Ball's middle-aged heart that Indian Summer day at Epping Forest when word was brought downstairs that a fifth daughter had just been born to him. If he could have known what manner of grandson that daughter was to give his house, his heart would have done more than stir—it would have prickled with pride. But there was no prophet at hand. And even if there had been, his prophecy would have sorely puzzled Joseph Ball, gentleman. For why should the Northern Neck of Virginia have need of a warrior? There was no war in sight, and none likely to be. Over in middle Europe, as a matter of dry fact, fate was even then getting ready a stolid German prince who was to found a dynasty that would give Virginia, Northern Neck and all, no end of trouble. Moreover the great grandson of that prince was to come to grips with the grandson of Joseph Ball and take the count. But it is highly probable that the only thing Ball did on that extraordinary day was to mount one of his horses and go for a long ride. It may be that in the muck of some deep road he met a Tayloe or a Lee or a Carter, and that in the course of the long conversation which ensued he made casual mention of having a new daughter. But even that is doubtful. The shipping of a load of tobacco or the landing of a cargo of blacks made far easier stuff for conversation between a couple of

Virginia plantation owners in the year of Our Lord one thousand seven hundred and seven.

Young Mary had come trailing no clouds of glory. The only clouds that trailed for her that day were mere rifts of haze on the two horizons, no bigger than a man's hand. There was a trail of glory, to be sure, but it was only the long-drawn beauty of Rappahannock tides washing the Lancaster shore a few miles to the southward, though that in itself was sufficient illumination for any birthday. The twilight came on casually enough. After the fiery water had paled and darkness settled down over the peninsula, lights flickered in the windows of Epping Forest and then went out. Perhaps one window remained faintly lighted all night. But there was nothing to mark the date as a red-letter one in the Virginia calendar.

At that time the name Virginia was a term of great breadth. The region that is now snugly bounded on its three land sides by Maryland, West Virginia, and two more southerly states, is a mere chip of the huge block to which the name was applied two centuries back. The fact is that, in appropriating America, England had bitten off not only more than she was going to be able to chew, but more than she could even measure. The early seventeenth century explorers had vaguely assumed that the new continent was bounded on the west by the Caribbean Sea. England, taking that cue, and thinking in purely insular terms, granted to the London Company a charter that was delightful in its possibilities.

The grant was practically boundless. Its airy clauses made mention of a vague region between such-and-such parallel lines "to the sea," and the rest was left to the developer. Nor did the passage of a hundred years add much to the sum total of information. When the Ball baby came on the scene her Virginia comprised, theoretically, all the region between Northern Pennsylvania and Southern Carolina and—thrown in for good measure—the land now called Kentucky, Southern Ohio, Indiana and Illinois, Northern Tennessee, Arkansas, Oklahoma, New Mexico and Arizona, Missouri, Kansas, and parts of Colorado, Utah, Nevada and California.

Small wonder that the dwellers in the Northern Neck, comfortably ensconced between two long, peaceful rivers, made no attempt to calculate horizons. They might as well have tackled the Einstein theory, if there had been such a thing in those days. To be sure, they knew that somewhere farther on there were two huge rivers called the Mississippi and the Ohio, because it was up those two streams that the French were pushing, and word of that steady progress was always working back to the coast. They were aware, also, in a vague way, that the worst of the Indian tribes were somewhat obstreperous on the western border, for the English settlers out there complained constantly that the eastern aristocrats did not care what happened so long as they themselves were safe. These accusations faintly annoyed the coast colonists, as did the fact that large numbers of what they called papists were almost in their back yard.

Still, the great mountain ranges stood to the west, and anything beyond those barriers seemed comfortably alien.

As for the Indians, there was nothing to be feared from them at that late hour. A hundred years before the birth of this child, King Tappahannock had ruled upper Lancaster, and on November days the only human footsteps that crackled in the woods were those of redskins, and the only boats on the blue creek waters were crude canoes. But for a century the dark race had been giving way before the white, pushed westward mile after mile into the hill country by a force they could not understand nor, for all their fierceness, resist. Down on the lower "Necks" the people of King Powhatan had fared the same way. Only the old King himself stayed behind, after a manner of speaking,—in the hundreds of white aristocrats in whose veins his red blood ran by way of his daughter Pocahontas.

But on the eastern coast there was little else left of the Indians except thousands of exquisitely polished arrow heads and the hollowed stones in which industrious squaws had pounded their yellow corn into rough white meal; those things and the musical names of hills and rivers, each with its own poetic meaning,—Tappahannock, Rappahannock, Monaskon, Wereocomico, and a hundred others,—which the English, with their genius for place names, had the good sense to retain. So Mary Ball's cradle was very safe that first night of her life. If, around midnight, an oaken board clicked

in the floor, it was frost, not a creeping brave. As for the French, they were as misty as figures in a dream.

All the same, now and then and here and there out on the border little flames were licking that would some day run into a conflagration. And when that should happen the baby in the quiet cradle would be called on to contribute largely to the task of putting out the fire.

Other forces, too, were working together, though at a greater distance than the western border, to menace the future peace of Virginia. Two tides, still far apart, the obstinacy of the Stuarts and the stupidity of the Hanoverians, were setting toward each other at right angles. Farther along, one of them was to meet a cross-current of its own, a free people's passion for freedom, and then there would be a crisis for Virginia. Into that whirlpool, too, the little Mary Ball would be drawn.

But all these things were far in the future. And meanwhile the Northern Neck, its crops in, its manor-houses and farmhouses and negro quarters dark and still under the November sky, was as quiet itself as any cradle on earth.

CHAPTER II

It was not ordained that Colonel Joseph Ball should live long enough to become more than slightly acquainted with his youngest daughter, much less to lay eyes on his famous grandson. At the time of Mary's birth he was nearly fifty years old, and only a few years later he died. Virginia had always been his home, for he was an immigrant at the age of one; his memories were limned against a background of Lancaster skies and framed by the woods and groves around Millenbeck, his father's great estate near the mouth of the Rappahannock. But he was well acquainted too with England; in fact it is highly probable that he was sent there to be educated. Certainly he made frequent trips to London in the interests of his father's tobacco business and continued to go after the business passed into his own hands. Both of his wives were Englishwomen—one of them Elizabeth Romney, the other a widow named Johnson.

There are scant materials available for making a picture of George Washington's maternal grandfather. The old accounts say that he was a man of "grave dignity,"

and after all that is a good deal to know. Also he was a prominent citizen of the Neck and played an important part in the affairs of his church and community. Just how he and his father came by the title of colonel is not a matter of certainty. One trustworthy chronicler in describing the General Court of Virginia says: "This august and aristocratic body was always composed of the class known at that time as 'gentlemen,' men of wealth, family, and influence. They, with the Governor, formed the executive council, who dispensed the entire patronage of the colony in the way of official appointment, at the same time that each individual was himself commissioned 'Colonel' by royal authority. . . . The Governor was Lieutenant-General, the Councillors, Lieutenants of Counties with the title of Colonel. . . ."

This may explain the title that William and Joseph Ball—as well as many of their contemporaries in Virginia—bore, though there is also a probability that the son was colonel of Foot and Horse in his county.

Though already born with a silver spoon in his mouth, Joseph Ball received from the Crown a large tract of land in the Northern Neck. This, added to his paternal inheritance, gave him fine holdings in real estate. In the middle of the crown grant he built a comfortable house and, his English blood still warm within him, named it in honor of the great wood north of London. There is a sort of inescapable irony in the fact that out of the loins of this good Britisher should spring the man who

broke the power of England in the new world. If he could have foreseen the event, taken out of its context as it were, his solemn calm might have been badly shaken. Luckily, however, the future cannot impinge upon a man's peace, and so in the short span of life that remained to him after the building of Epping Forest, the solemn Englishman lived contentedly enough in the midst of his broad acres. Fate played an even odder trick on his father, William Ball, royalist, who would have been incredulous could he have had a premonition of General Washington's activities. But neither of the worthy gentlemen was born a seer; and it is a powerful, even though vulgar, commonplace that what we do not know cannot hurt us.

This Colonel William Ball is supposed to have been the founder of the Virginia family of that name. Genealogy, the most disconcerting of all the studies of humanity, is full of pitfalls, but with a fair degree of certainty Mary Ball can be carried back through a long and honorable English line. Her grandfather is the first link with the old country. There is a supposition that he was born in Virginia, but that his parents took him back to England when he was an infant, and that he had to recross the sea to plant his tribe on the new shores. However that may be, much of his life was spent on English soil, and very actively and tellingly at that. It is safe to assume that he is the William Ball mentioned in the Cheshire Visitation; it is known positively that in the civil wars he served on the side of the King, taking

part in Naseby and Marston Moor, and finally paying the penalty of the lost cause with the forfeit of all his possessions and exile across the sea. Here indeed is a fine streak of irony. To battle for the divine right of kings and then settle down to furnish the world with the arch enemy of that principle—the stars in their courses must have halted to laugh! But as in the case of his son, whatever he may have been capable of feeling about the American Revolution, he was not called upon to feel it. The one that he did oppose was a brilliant success; and so, turning his back squarely, and under distinct pressure, on Roundhead England, he took ship for a less disappointing land. Perhaps there rang in his ears the challenge of his countryman, Michael Drayton, who a few years before had cried:

Britons, you stay too long:
Quickly aboard bestow you,
And with a merry gale
Swell your stretched sail
With vows as strong
As the winds that blow you.

And cheerfully at sea
Success you still entice
To get the pearl and gold,
And ours to hold
Virginia,
Earth's only paradise.

And in regions far,
Such heroes bring ye forth
As those from whom we came;
And plant our name
Under that star
Not known unto our North.

The pearl and gold of Virginia, with all due respect to Drayton, were mostly poetic license, and the hero that Ball was to bring forth would be a long time coming; but it was very evident that as a Briton he had stayed too long in his native land. The tobacco crops in the new country would be every whit as good as gold, and moreover they would be safe from the rascal Cromwell. So he stood not on the order of his going but set indignant sail.

The old sod still pulled, however, and there are strong indications that he long regarded his stay in Virginia as contingent on developments in England. For some time the newcomer did not take up any land grant in the new country, a significant omission for a prominent settler, and eight years passed before his name figured at all in the public records of Lancaster. He was reluctant, apparently, to send down roots into strange soil. Nevertheless, when the Stuarts were restored to the throne he stayed on where he was. Virginia autumns had worked their powerful spell upon him.

Lancaster County forms the toe of the long stocking of land formed by the two big rivers bearing Indian names.

The strong tides of the Rappahannock, here broadening to its source, and the limitless waters of the Chesapeake have fretted the coastline there into numberless small peninsulas and these peninsulas again into scores of slender points. On the neck of land carved out by the main stream and little Corotoman River, Ball built a fine Georgian dwelling-house and named it Millenbeck, perhaps after a place in Warwickshire by that name. On the end of the longest point he built a pier, too, where vessels from across the sea, making up the river to the port of Falmouth, at the head of navigation, could stop to take on his tobacco and discharge merchandise in exchange. There at Millenbeck he lived for years with his wife Hannah—she was to pass her name along to scores of granddaughters—and his three children and his retinue of black slaves and indentured white servants.

He was a man of large energy and initiative, and his failure in England did not carry over into new-world activities. There is evidence that for a long while he operated a trade ship between the two countries, for in the local records he is listed as "Merchant." Tobacco, probably, was the merchandise in which he dealt, and it was his own good ship that made the most constant use of the Millenbeck pier. That product was Virginia's main source of income, her principal asset by long odds. With good soil and hot sunshine, frequent rains and abundant slave labor, there were endless possibilities of wealth in the broad-leaved, acrid plant with which the ill-starred Raleigh first tickled the palates of Europe.

Colonel William Ball was royal in sentiment and loyal in spirit, but the Stuart line was a wavering one, and a man must live. So he kept his home in Virginia, and only now and then pushed back across the sea with one of his pungent cargoes.

Like his son a generation later, he took a keen interest in matters of Church and State. He was made a colonel with all that this involved, whatever it may have been, he was presiding member of various Lancaster courts, and served on county committees; he served as a warden of Christ Church. One year, with a prominent John Carter of the neighborhood, he was empowered by the General Assembly to proceed in the task of mobilizing forces against Indian outrages a little farther west. In the following year—1676—we find him working with a neighbor of his to induce the immediate payment of a tax that had been levied on the people in connection with Bacon's Rebellion. That was Virginia's first tentative move against the power of England. By this time, it is evident, Ball had become a good Virginian. The neighbor who helped him in the matter was named John Washington. And once more the stars chuckled, for Ball and Washington elements were to join strength again, albeit much later on, over the question of taxation.

When William Ball died he left his family two thousand acres of lush land. In faithful accordance with English tradition, Millenbeck house went to the elder of his two sons, William; but Joseph received a goodly

heritage of farm fields and thick woodland. The old gentleman must have had a gouty temper, for he is distinctly crotchetty in his last dealings with his only daughter. It is probable that she had married against his wishes; certainly she had roiled him in some way, for he sputters in his will, "Item: I give my daughter Hannah, ye wife of Capt. David ffoxe, only five shillings sterling," and adds, "which is an overplus both of her portion and deserts." This is definite enough, in all conscience. It leaves us very curious concerning Hannah "ffoxe."

So far as can be made out, the family line of these Balls of Millenbeck and Epping Forest goes straight back for centuries to the time when, in the village of Barkham, or Beorcham, near London, we find a Ball lord of the local manor. This first William Ball was succeeded, so the records say—and Anglo-Saxon records can be depended upon—by his son Robert; and from Robert, down through a perfect welter of William Balls, descended William of Marston Moor and Millenbeck. Thus the little girl at Epping Forest was a tiny acorn from a mighty oak.

The history of Beorcham village carries far back of the Balls themselves. The place was already venerable when William the Conqueror, no less, ruled there as lord of the manor. An ancient charter proves that in 951 King Aedrid had given the domain to his thane Aelfin. Another old document goes on with the story. The thane Aelfin, it appears, never dreaming of a certain

Norman ruffian yet to be born, deeded Beorcham in his turn, through the instrument of a long screed done holily in sonorous, if somewhat garbled, Latin and sturdy Saxon, "to God and the blessed Virgin . . . and to the monks serving God there in pure and perpetual charity." Charity, however, was not an outstanding quality in the ethical makeup of William the Norman. He came, and saw—and shortly after seeing was lord of the manor himself. What became of the monks is not on record.

During the period between the eleventh century and the sixteenth, a mist closes over Beorcham so far as Balls are concerned, but in 1480 a Ball, by name William of course, is occupying the manor. When he died his grandson, William of Wokingham, succeeded to the honor. The town of Wokingham is to have a place again, long afterward, in the family's history.

There were giants of a sort as far back as those dim days. As a matter of fact, to get safely through the peril and hardship that then constituted living was to achieve gianthood automatically, as it were. To carry on through those times with hardihood and success and withal a certain *joie de vivre* connotes a spiritual stature that it is difficult for us to measure in this comfortable era of ours. A man stood in jeopardy every hour. It must have been in that period that the English adopted the left-hand turn in riding and driving. The traveler on a lonely road would naturally find it convenient to have his right arm on the inner side ready for use when he met another horseman. Should the other traveler prove friendly, all

well and good; if otherwise, then the right arm could go at once into action. It worries the modern mind a little to reflect that the arrangement must have worked equally well for the highwayman; but that is a mere detail.

There were few comforts and almost no luxuries in those sinewy days, even in manors. People got along as best they could. They built homes, they married and begot. When their king called, as he did continually, they buckled on their armor and went off to war. In peace times they farmed and raised cattle and apparently were content. And those who had anything to will away methodically made wills.

The Ball tribe were very careful about their wills, and quite specific. That of Edward, brother of Wokingham William, is full of wistful details. It was drawn up not long before he returned to what he quaintly terms "the church earthe of God at St. James th'Aple at Barkham." They were very religious in a casual, childlike way, those old Englishmen. Ball's first consideration was for the dignity of his funeral: "V s" (five shillings) "to the byying of a crosse to goe before the procession at Barkham churche." His family and friends next received attention. "Item, I give my lands named Buttells in the parishe of Okingham to Agnes my wiffe. To Walter Pyper a sherte of canvas. I give II shertes of canvas to children of Matthew Lyfford's. To my daughter Katheryne Ball a branded heifere of a yeare old with the advantage . . . the residue to Agnes Ball, my wyffe,

sole exequetrix. . . ." This was before sixteen hundred, and currency was scarce; fifty-one pounds, twelve pennies, is all the cash that he dispensed. This same Edward Ball may also have been the donor of the great silver chalice, still in existence, from which innumerable Balls, through the long years, took the sacrament.

The last thoughts of Agnes Ball are like those of her husband, mournfully occupied with the proper disposal of heifers and other personal property. After enumerating several feminine items, such as her "best doble vayle of holland" and "eleven kerchers," she adds the religious touch without which no will and testament was satisfactory—"and . . . my best chrystening shete."

The old registers of Barkham church, more like yellow lace than paper, are full of Ball entries. The first name in one of the volumes is Cathryn Ball's, she of the branded heifer and the double veil. Her name is not given as it was in her father's will, but in Cathryn's day, as in Mary's two centuries after, rules for spelling were not so rigid as to inflict hardship or even inconvenience. The child was baptized in Barkham church on the twenty-second day of February, 1538. Though the mystics tell us that time is only a word and that the future is implicit in the present, it is a safe assumption that not one of the Balls gathered at the Beorcham font on that occasion had an inkling of the far-flung significance of that particular month and day for their particular clan.

The village of Barkham—part of it is Markham now—wears today that air of calm and conscious worth

peculiar to English villages. Tall elms stand guard over clustering cottages, a manor-house, a rectory, and a little inn called "The Bull." A few miles away, at Wokingham, there exists a Ball charity, an instrument through which by the grace of some long dead benevolent Ball yearly help is administered to the deserving poor. England is speckled with such charities. In one Kentish village a hundred loaves of bread are given out on a certain day in each year at the behest of two sisters who died centuries ago. These sisters were born joined together like the Siamese twins, and they seem to have taken a sort of mournful pride in perpetuating the memory of their singularity. Today their name and their affliction is blessed in Kent, as is the name of Ball in Wokingham.

How that name Ball originated is a matter of doubt. It may be a contraction of Baldwin, the name borne by the first counts of Flanders. The father-in-law of William the Conqueror had the title Baldwin VIII, and it is known that many of his family settled in England. As the years went on the name suffered the usual modifications of a word that has been grafted on to foreign stock; at various times and places it cropped up as Balle, Bale, Baell. There is a possibility that it was changed to suit circumstances, for Ball has some kinship with the Saxon word meaning bold, while bael signifies a funeral pile—though this latter term would hardly furnish the source of a name. Still, as we have seen, there was a sort of family failing among the Balls for the pomp and vanity of funeral rites. One chronicler offers the

lame suggestion that Baldwin may signify one who is bold enough to win, and in the light of what later emerged from Ball stock that interpretation might well be considered, though it would involve a surprising amount of foresight on the part of the old English. Whether or not "bold friend" is the proper interpretation,—as is most likely,—no investigator so far has been willing to fix the name Ball as the equivalent of bald. And no one cares anyway.

The family coat-of-arms is impressive. In the middle of the eighteenth century a grandson of William Ball of Millenbeck spent some time in England looking up his line of descent. He brought back a reproduction of the coat-of-arms; some of the Lancaster Balls have it now in their possession. It's a wise family that knows positively its own crest, and no one is prepared to take oath as to the authenticity of the reproduction in question. Burke says that fifteen separate and distinct armorial bearings have been conferred upon persons of the name of Ball. Nevertheless the genuineness in this instance seems reasonably sure. The drawing shows "a rampant lion holding a globe in his paw, a helmet and shield, a visor strong, and a coat of mail, and other emblems of strength and courage." Burke's description of the bearings in the College of Heralds, which are virtually the same, is slightly more confusing: "Argent a lion pass. sa. on a chief of the second three mullets of the first. Crest out of the clouds ppr a demi lion ramp. sa. powdered with estoiles ar. holding a glob or."

This, of course, is A. B. C. to the student of heraldry. But even the layman, pondering the mystic syllables, is able to translate them into a sort of prophecy. A girl baby with a crest out of the clouds over her cradle and a demi lion ramping on her silver spoon might well manage to impress herself in one way or another on posterity.

The motto, being interpreted, reads "Look upward." It might have read also, "and outward," for they were a far-seeing lot, those Balls, ready to make strange ventures and undertake large issues. Indeed, to get a strong foothold, as they did, on a perilous new continent, involved looking upward and outward and in every other direction, particularly behind, for at first the American natives were hot on their trail. They established themselves magnificently in Virginia. The brief monosyllable of their surname marks almost every tombstone in the graveyard of St. Mary's White Chapel down in Lancaster. It was under another name that the family was to achieve everlasting glory, nevertheless the material would be largely their own contribution. Meanwhile, the newest member of the clan in the year 1707 lay on a placid pillow at Epping Forest, occupied chiefly with her thumb and equally indifferent to what was past and what was yet to come.

FRONT HALL AT EPPING FOREST

CHAPTER III

The house called Epping Forest, where Washington's mother was born, is still standing. That red dragon, fire, which goes up and down old neighborhoods seeking what it may devour and particularly hungry for colonial houses somehow passed this home by with only a lick or two. It is practically the same building that Joseph Ball erected on his crown grant. The immense chimneys rise above a grove of cedars, poplars, and sycamores in the midst of a broad, level sweep of richly wooded land. One wing was added some years ago to the original structure, but little other change can be found. Time has done what it could to the great fireplace in the living-room with its hearth of pinkish brick, to the heavy axe-hewed sills and the mortised sleepers of the framework; it could not do much, though, for those bricks were moulded with a generous hand and that timber was cut to last. Some of the sycamores in the front yard may easily have seen the sun rise on the day of Mary Ball's birth. Out in the back yard an aged coach house still holds its own, and a remnant of the slave quarters—probably the kitchen, since it has a

fireplace eight feet wide and so deep that the proverbial ox would be lost in the roasting.

Of all the crumbling remains on earth the livest are those of an ancient hearthstone. The last child of the Epping Forest family may have stood beside that old kitchen fireplace when she could barely keep her balance and waited while the black cook baked for her in the hot ashes a corn-pone suited to her diminutive size. Two miles farther down the road are the ruins of Ball's Mill; that was where the corn was ground smooth and delicate by swift water over a wheel in preparation for being shaped into pones. A few decades ago workers on the estate unearthed, six feet below the surface, two huge mill stones. How they became buried there is a mystery, but there is small doubt that in their time they had ground many a bushel of corn for Ball consumption.

Joseph Ball's youngest daughter could scarcely have retained any clear memory of him. She was little more than a baby when he was gathered, like his long-ago kinsman of Beorcham, to "the church earthe of God." The earth in Lancaster was less ancient in name only than the old plot across the sea. It was that rambling graveyard at White Chapel Church that was to gather so many Balls as the years rolled on. He had made his will carefully on a summer day not long before, devising to his infant daughter many acres of land in "ye freshes of Rappa-h-n river."

The wife that he left behind, little Mary's mother, does not stand out with great distinctness; even her

maiden name is unknown. When Joseph Ball met her, probably on one of his business trips to England, she was a widow, Mary Johnson, the mother of a boy and a girl. The two were married not long afterward. It is supposed that the wedding took place in London, though there is an almost equal chance that Virginia was the place. He was a middle-aged man at that time and his bride was well past the equivocal period known—with great rigidity in those days—as "first youth." In fact, since she had at the time two children over seven years old, she may have progressed some distance beyond that age, for a female over twenty-five was distinctly in the sere and yellow leaf. Still, married women had greater leeway than spinsters, and so when Mary Johnson met the American merchant, she may have still passed for young.

The pair had some trouble at the outset with their romance. If they were married in England, the engagement must have been of several months' duration, because, though the post went like a snail, his children in Virginia got wind of his intentions. Ball may have come home and made his own announcement. However that may be, they somehow heard the rumor that Mrs. Johnson was of plebeian birth, whereat they raised a loud outcry.

It may be that the opposition was egged on by older members of the family. Colonel William, their grandfather, was dead, and so was their uncle William, but Hannah Ball still lived, the same Hannah who had been

cut off in her father's will with a paltry sum. There is a possibility that Joseph had shared his father's disapproval of Hannah's marriage, and that this memory still rankled. If that was the case, human nature being what it is she probably jumped at the chance presented now. The matter of the widow Johnson's social standing offered a picturesquely appropriate opportunity too good to be missed.

This is mere idle speculation, of course. Anyhow, the rumor was soon effectively nailed. For evidence was brought forward that not only was the prospective bride as good as any Ball, she was if anything better, being in direct descent from the ducal house of Montague, as proud a house as any in England. It is not altogether certain that this claim would have held, but Joseph Ball and Mary Johnson sincerely believed in it, and George Washington accepted it later on, for his seals bore the Montague device. Be that as it may, the protests in Lancaster seem to have been effectively silenced. There was no way of disproving the assertion, certainly, and anyhow it would impress the haughty Carters and Lees, whose blood ran such pure azure in their veins that they would assuredly have turned up their noses at a bride without a crest.

It is diverting to dwell on that situation. If Mary Johnson had been proved frankly plebeian and had still persisted in coming to the Northern Neck to be snubbed, it would have been a wry joke indeed for future generations. But as things turned out she came unchal-

lenged, the grandmother of the first President, and walked calmly, and with all the air of the Montagues, over the threshold of Epping Forest.

She must have been a woman of uncommon courage, for it could have been no easy matter to come to an utterly strange land and enter a divided household. Perhaps it required more than a little strength of character, also, to refrain from taking advantage of her recent triumph in the battle over her social standing. But the likelihood is that she had scant time for either airs or introspection. Few matrons had in those days. Their destiny was *Kinder, Küche, Kirche;* whether or not they knew German, they knew that. In manor or in farmhouse a woman must bear and bring up babies, attend to the kitchen, and go faithfully to the Sunday services. Mary Johnson Ball was doubtless like all the rest of them. It would be highly interesting to know something more about her. She was incurably given to marrying, that much is certain, for Joseph Ball was followed rather promptly by a third husband. And she was kind and good-humored; at least nothing to the contrary has come down to us. But aside from these things, and aside from the little matter of the spiked scandal, her history is obscure.

In spite of all the complications of relationship, the family at Epping Forest was a small one, for by the time the new mother arrived the daughters were all in homes of their own, and the only son, a second Joseph, was probably off at school in England. So that little John

and Elizabeth Johnson, brought in with the bridal party, were the only children at the place until Mary came to provide the apex for the queer triangle. The stepsisters lived nearby with their constantly increasing families, and there were swarms of cousins,—Joseph's brother William had left eight sons and daughters,—so that the Balls made up a large tribe, large enough, in fact, to compete with the innumerable Carters.

Naturally this late marriage of widow and widower had the effect of throwing the last-born child hopelessly out of her proper generation. Instead of falling into place with the rest of old William Ball's grandchildren, she appeared on the planet twenty years behind the youngest of them, a contemporary of their children instead. With a father old enough to be her grandfather, seven sisters and brothers old enough to be her parents, and half a dozen nieces and nephews already on hand, she found herself at the outset in a fine chronological mixup.

In a way it was fortunate. That sort of thing is bound to make for more or less confusion, but in Virginia, during that age, there was so much marrying, and re-marrying, and inter-marrying, with such an incredible number of offspring from each union, that no one bothered about wrestling with the various problems that resulted. New babies came along out of alignment entirely as a matter of course. At Epping Forest the simple sentiment must have been: "Here are John and Elizabeth Johnson, and—on his vacations—young Joseph; and scattered around the neighborhood are their older sisters, Hannah

Travers, Elizabeth Carnegie, Esther Chinn, and Ann Conway; then, here is Mary." And that was all there was to it.

There is little likelihood that the youngest child by coming so behindhand found her times out of joint. As the daughter of her parents' mature years, what she lost by her lateness was doubtless made up to her in extra affection. Moreover, there were certain honors attached to her position. Even in that region of complicated kinship, to be at twelve years old the aunt of fifteen boys and girls, as she eventually came to be, must have carried with it distinct prestige.

It was not written in Mary's horoscope that she should remain long at the house where she was born, or long at any other house for many years to come. When, a few months after her father's death, her mother married Captain Richard Hewes, the child was taken to the new home in Northumberland, the county that forms the heel of the stocking of land named Northern Neck and runs far up into the leg. Her stepfather's estate lay on the Potomac and along the Yeocomico River, which separates Northumberland from Westmoreland. He was a man of prominence in his county, a wealthy merchant, captain of the militia and also a vestryman, as were all prominent men sooner or later in that day, of the Episcopal church—in this case, St. Stephen's. But the little girl had small opportunity to know him, for he lived only a short while after his marriage.

Much of the time during the succeeding years of her

childhood and early girlhood was spent with her sister Elizabeth who had been a Johnson and had married a Bonhum. There was strong affection between the two sisters. When Mary was born the older girl was a somewhat forlorn child, living in the home of her stepfather and perhaps wistful for her native land. The coming of the little half sister must have meant much to her. She probably mothered Mary from the start, and later on when, in the shifting of circumstances, the child was obliged to leave home and take up life under a strange roof, the other seems still to have yearned for her. The Hewes farm, Cherry Point, and the other farm, on Bonhum's Creek, were only a few miles apart, and there was much visiting between the two places. Another nearby home was the estate of Major George Eskridge, a warm friend of the Hewes and Ball families, and the father of a tribe of little girls near Mary Ball's own age.

They tell it to this day, down in that neighborhood, how young Miss Ball used to ride horseback between these plantations. She was born to the saddle like every other Virginia girl, probably having learned to ride almost as soon as she learned to walk, and she had her own horse. So the rough roads between the Potomac points must have become very familiar to her.

There was one time during her little girlhood when she took a long, long trip. At some date between the death of Captain Hewes and the marriage of Elizabeth Johnson, Mary Hewes went back to England, for what reason or for how long, none can say, and took up tem-

porary residence at old Wokingham, the village that was closely identified with her former husband's family. Her choice of the place may have been, of course, only a singular coincidence, but it carried the younger daughter back to the very spot from which she had drawn. They did not stay there long. By 1714 Elizabeth had married and settled in Westmoreland. It was after that that the rides between Sandy Point, Cherry Point, and Bonhum's Creek began.

Mary is not likely to have traveled very widely in the Northern Neck except at long intervals and on some very special trip. The roads were so outrageous and the vehicles so cumbersome that journeys were not lightly undertaken. That was before the day of highway commissions and bond issues for new roads. At certain times of the year the main road through the Neck was little better than a morass, and the crossroads were positively perilous. As much as fifty years later conditions were much the same. There is an account in an old diary of a trip by carriage to a plantation down on the end of a Potomac point. The plantation, incidentally, was the home of one of Mary Ball's future sons, John Augustine Washington. After the visitor's carriage had rocked for miles through a bottomless bog a rider was sighted, coming out from the Washington place to act as escort. By that time the wheels were axle-deep in mud and the horses floundering in water up to their bellies. It is said that the exasperated traveler put his head out of the carriage window and yelled with unmistakable temper and

at the top of his lungs: "My good man, will you have the kindness to tell me how many miles out into the Potomac River your unfortunate master lives?"

An expedition from lower Lancaster to upper Westmoreland might easily prove a matter of ten days. Small wonder that Virginia hospitality developed finally into a sort of religion. The rider who drew rein at a colonial doorway near twilight had in all probability been on the road for half a week. If, coming in to take a cup of tea, he tarried for a fortnight, who would blame him? Certainly not the master or mistress of the home. Tales are told, dating a century and a half after Mary Ball's time, of company coming to spend a night and remaining for a year. In one Virginia family there is a perfectly authentic story of a middle-aged gentlewoman who arrived at a country home, all unannounced, for a brief visit and somehow loitered pleasantly on, the whole family pleasant, too, for the remainder of her long life. That was in Civil War times when, heaven knows, and she herself was bound to have known, there was almost nothing to be hospitable with. But at least the god of hospitality had not been offended. It was lamentable, this slavery to an ancient habit, but all the same no one can say it was not beautiful.

In the case of the Hewes and Bonhum families, however, there could be, of course, no question of hospitality; the two households regarded themselves as one. Mary Ball must have hugely enjoyed the little journeys to and from her sister's home, for life on the Yeocomico is bound

to have waxed a trifle monotonous at times for a growing girl who was still too young for much in the way of social diversions.

In her day the Northern Neck was far larger than it is now. The name was applied to the whole great strip lying between the entire length of the Potomac and Rappahannock Rivers, that is to say, the upper section of Virginia and a part of what is now West Virginia. The size of the Neck shrank a great deal with the passing of time, but even now, in its final form, reaching from the head of navigation on the lower river to the Chesapeake Bay, the peninsula is a region of no mean dimensions. A proud peninsula it has always been, too, and with ample cause for pride. It has given to the world Washington, Madison, Monroe, Richard Henry Lee, and Robert E. Lee; George Mason was born within its first boundaries; and scores of other soldiers and statesmen have gone forth from its counties to do their splendid best for America. Almost every turn of the road from Frederickburg, just across the river at its upper edge, to the Chesapeake shore at its tip, is marked by the site of some mansion or humbler house that made in its time a great contribution to the history of the country.

When Mary Ball was a girl the Northern Neck was composed of Stafford, King George, Westmoreland, Richmond, Northumberland, and Lancaster, and a large area farther north and west. It was all a part of the dominion of Lord Culpeper, with King Carter ruling as a sort of under-lord. The merry monarch Charles II was

at his merriest when signing away huge tracts of lands that he had never seen and had no wish to see. It was in one of these gay moods that, for a substantial consideration of quitrents, he made over most of Virginia to one of the peers of his realm. With the grant went monstrous prerogatives, among others the right to bestow parishes at will. But this indignity was too much for the potential makers of a Republic, and so many complaints were lodged against the system that Culpeper's ownership was at length restricted to the Northern Neck.

Later on, through the marriage of Lord Culpeper's daughter, the Neck came into possession of Thomas Fairfax, seventh Earl of Cameron, a nephew of the great general who served in Cromwell's army. And with the passing into his hands of this particular region, several threads crossed significantly in the pattern of Virginia's history. For Mary Ball's grandfather had battled under Stuart banners against General Fairfax, and one Washington had held the garrison at Worcester against him; moreover, in years to come, the Fairfaxes were to make contact again with the Balls and Washingtons.

Once the matter of giving away parishes was settled, the Northern Neck flourished under Culpeper and Carter. It was a splendid region of arable land, well stocked with fine game, fruit, fish, and everything else that heart could wish. The low ridge that runs like a backbone down the middle of the peninsula is broken into rolling hills, and northward and southward those hills fall away into wooded slopes and green river bot-

toms. When Joseph Ball lay in his lodging chamber and, "with sound and disposing mind" willed his little girl a farm in the Rappahannock freshes, he was doing well by her. Beverley, the historian, writing of Virginia a year or two before that, describes the river land as of a "slow, moist, fat mould, such as the heavier sort of grain delight in . . . varied here and there with veins of a cold, hungry, sandy soil." Beverley knew whereof he wrote. Nothing could better depict little Mary's heritage than that list of succulent adjectives.

The two streams that bound the Neck, Potomac, said to mean "river of swans," and Rappahannock, "quick-rising water," have cut the coast steadily with the passing centuries. But even in those days the shore, especially the Rappahannock shore, was fringed like an old-fashioned shawl. Down on the rim of Lancaster where Colonel William Ball's tobacco ships early cleared the river of Indian canoes, there is still a wharf at Millenbeck. In these later times when the Baltimore steamer bound for Fredericksburg curves round the point, no one aboard need be surprised if some day the old colonel's ghost strolls out to take its stand and watch, in ghostly astonishment, the unbelievably strange craft warping in to his pier.

One part of the world, in the early 1700's, knew very little of how the other part lived. There were no papers, and news had to gather slowly in by word of mouth or else arrive in letters that were stale as last week's baking. By this very token tidings were greatly valued, some-

times attaining a reputation out of all proportion to their real importance. And each rumor as it wafted in was pondered, weighed, and discussed until some time later on when another came in to confirm or refute it as the case might be.

An alert child living in the Northern Neck during that period might easily pick up a good deal of information about public affairs. If the widow Hewes' daughter listened to the conversation of her elders during those first ten or fifteen years, she must frequently have had food for thought, though to be sure it may have been now and then rather indigestible food.

Complaints kept on coming in from the western settlers, who, pushing on against incredible difficulties, resented more and more the complacency of the eastern plantation owners, safe on broad river farms while their brothers held back the aliens. Word drifted down intermittently of New England's struggle with the common foe. Over in Europe the War of the Spanish Succession continued to send reverberations to America, and so did the war of words in England, where Whigs and Tories lambasted each other with abandon, and High and Low churchmen diligently engaged in stirring up the peculiar kind of trouble that churchmen not keenly concerned with the Church are adepts at making. The child must have heard a jumble of comment and speculation—talk of Marlborough's victories, of the unworthiness of dissenters and the inherent vileness of Louis XIV, of the new British flag that was henceforth to fly a red

cross and a white, finally of the long-delayed Peace of Utrecht. She may even have heard faint echoes of the Glorious Revolution and have wondered what the long word revolution might mean. And she must have caught vague reminiscences of the Battle of the Boyne, and maybe of Sedgemoor. For after all, Virginia was England, and the colonists realized it and viewed her incessant activities, though not with alarm, at least with strong interest.

There was much talk, particularly among the women folk, of England's ruler, to whom distance lent a sentimental charm. For some obscure psychological reason there is nothing in heaven or earth that so stirs the average feminine soul as a queen. Mary heard endless discussion in dining-room and parlor of the merits of Good Queen Anne. The good Queen was in reality very fat and ineffective, with a constitutional capacity for being gulled and hardly any brains at all. But she wore a crown, and her innumerable babies were always dying, which made her, naturally, an object of sympathy; and moreover she was supposed—and earnestly supposed herself—to have the power of curing scrofula with a touch of her hand. One year she touched a little awkward, half-blind boy, exactly Mary Ball's age, who grew up, still scrofulous, to become the famous lexicographer, Samuel Johnson.

Two years after that an event took place which was to prove of overwhelming significance to the child in the Northern Neck of Virginia, three thousand miles away.

Queen Anne died (her miraculous touch perishing with her), and George, the stout Hanover elector, came lumbering to the throne to found his doubtful dynasty. Mary Ball was probably sailing paper boats on the Yeocomico when the news reached Northumberland, and felt no concern. She could not be troubled by the fact that some day her son and the new monarch's great-grandson (poor little Mary growing worse out of kilter with each decade) must collide sharply, and that the collision would shake her life.

There were two things talked about in her childhood that no doubt fastened much more vividly on her imagination than ever a new King could. One was Bacon's Rebellion, which, though ancient history by her day, was still discussed in retrospect, for Nathaniel Bacon was not a figure to be forgotten readily. She heard also, and with even more pricking of the ears, about the remarkable doings, not long in the past, of old women called witches, scalp-tingling tales that floated down from New England—indeed, from much nearer than that. If anything would stick like a burr in a small girl's imagination, a witch would. It is doubtful whether as late as Anno Domini 1720, Mary Ball would have run alone past a harmless chinquapin bush on Bonhum's Creek.

The adventure of the Knights of the Golden Horseshoe must have been as familiar to her as any nursery tale, and far more vivid, for it took place under her very nose and had for its hero her own Governor of Virginia. She was just eight when Alexander Spottswood led his

rollicking band of cavaliers on the longest horseback ride ever taken in hard-riding Virginia. It must have roiled the pioneers at the western border when they heard how jauntily the well-dressed band had pushed up the hills to find out what lay beyond the Blue Ridge. But the adventurers had a steady purpose beneath their light-heartedness, and night and day they rode, for all their rollicking, until at length, straining wearily through Rockfish Gap, they pulled up short, as on a peak in Darien, before the panorama of the Valley of the Shenandoah. It was a big achievement, for it opened up the way for the settlement of that superb region. What probably burned brightest in little Mary Ball's mind was Spottswood's bestowal on each knight of a gallant gold trinket shaped like a horseshoe. That he also climbed a precipitous rock and carved there the name of the first Hanoverian king was a feature of the exploit that had no power to impress her at all.

CHAPTER IV

Life at Cherry Point, the Hewes home, must have been a simple sort of existence. Captain Hewes had left his wife in comfortable circumstances, but the growing girl probably knew little luxury and plenty of hard work. There were servants to do the drudgery, of course, for the black people whom the colonials had brought in as fast as they pushed out the red were a prolific crowd, and even the plainest estate swarmed with laborers. But Mary Ball would have numerous tasks no matter how many servants her mother owned. She took an active part, it is to be imagined, in the housekeeping and in many other duties of the place. Perhaps she had a garden of her own. Certainly somewhere and somehow in those years were laid the foundations of that love and knowledge of natural things that afterward became so strong an element in her character. To be born in a country region and go on living there for long years is to come into a priceless heritage, a legacy that pays dividends for the rest of life.

So the girl was kept sufficiently busy for contentment, and in between her tasks she took horseback rides to

the Eskridge and Bonhum homes and now and then to other places, for upper Northumberland and lower Westmoreland, which joined at the Yeocomico, were thickly settled neighborhoods. The Lees, the McCartys, the Washingtons and many other families were settled there. It is likely that she visited often at Bewdley, the home of her cousin, Major James Ball. In after years there was proof of strong affection between herself and the Bewdley Balls.

Sundays were favorite days. Though the people of that day and region may not have been much given to coming together during the week, once a week, anyway, there was a large foregathering at the church. This would have been the case even apart from the fact that slackness in churchgoing meant a tax of many pounds of good tobacco. The social side of the occasion by itself would have brought a congregation. But there was more than that. Mary Ball's ancestors of Beorcham who had concerned themselves so earnestly with funeral crosses and christening sheets were in no closer touch with religion than were the Virginians of her own day. These later Balls and their neighbors clung, with a kind of naïve confidence, at least to the authority and promises of the Church. They would no more have thought of letting an infant go without baptism than of letting it go without clothes; and a marriage ceremony performed by a magistrate would have seemed to them no marriage at all. Each representative family had its own great pew; the parish register was as distinctly an institution as the

social register to-day. When Northern Neckers of the Church of England died, they died, to judge from their tombstones, in the Lord. The moss-covered, water-stained old slabs around St. Mary's White Chapel and Christ Church testify to the utter faith of many a Ball and Carter in a glorious immortality.

It must be admitted that the colonial church in Virginia suffered greatly here and there from laxness. For many long years—although it is hard to say why—no Bishop came over from England. Without bishops the rite of confirmation could not be administered and the congregations, consequently, could not be well built up. Nor could there be any ordaining done, though for that matter Virginia had no facilities for educating her young men for the ministry. As a direct result of this state of affairs, there was an influx of undesirable rectors, clergymen who for reasons best known to themselves—and as a rule well kept to themselves—had kicked the dust off their feet on English parishes and come to find new livings in a new land. Since they neglected to shake off their bad habits along with their dust, the effect was lamentable. In more than one flock the shepherd was little better than a wolf in sheep's clothing. Drinking and dicing went on, and playing havoc in general with holy things, to the proper scandalization of dissenters and to the grief of the godly orthodox. One bad-tempered parson, flying into a rage with the officers of his church, used his fists with such abandon that he created much havoc, and then on the following Sunday tried to

justify his performance by glibly quoting Scripture: "and I contended with them, and smote them, and pulled out their hair." Another spent so much time in fox hunting that he found no leisure for hunting souls, though the souls would doubtless have fled from him if he had. On his death bed the ruling passion was still strong, and he died hallooing to hounds.

Such a condition in the religious life of a people cried aloud for remedying, but it was a long time before the remedy came. The brazen interlopers kept on in their brazenness. "All my hopes terminate," said Dean Swift, doubtless with his tongue in his cheek, "in being made Bishop of Virginia."

But there were more faithful than unfaithful shepherds. Splendid, indefatigable fellows they were, too, some of those colonial parsons. The difficulty of accumulating and conserving a congregation without any canonical means of bestowing membership must have been colossal. But they managed some way; perhaps they stretched the canons a little. At any rate, going forward under almost overwhelming difficulties, traveling great distances,—for many a Virginia parish was as large as an English see,—with salaries none too large and congregations frequently demoralized by worthless predecessors, they held the Church together with an efficiency that must have impressed even a mind so immature as Mary Ball's.

With all its handicaps, therefore, the Church as an institution loomed large in the consciousness of the early

Virginians. The parish was the unit in every region; around it revolved the whole community life. Even the so-called evangelical groups felt its influence,—rather feebly, however, since they regarded the Anglicans as satellites of Rome, while the Anglicans, on their side, though spurning Rome, scarcely regarded the Evangelicals at all. But here another troublesome issue was involved which, though purely social in its nature, was even harder to deal with. The Episcopalians were firmly convinced that the blood of the nonconformists was of a paler hue than their own. That this fact, if it was a fact, could not possibly have resulted from nonconformity, had no weight with the aristocrats. Aristocracy has never been concerned with logic to the point of inconvenience, and it was eminently convenient to identify the other beliefs—Presbyterianism, for example—with plebeianism. The Presbyterians and Baptists must sit alone beneath their vines and fig-trees. Under no circumstances could a fig-tree be counted as a family tree; on that point the blue bloods stood firm. God might save a heretic through some gracious though incomprehensible ingenuity of his own; the heretic's social status should be attended to by earthly agency—and was.

The dissenters stood up under this suprisingly well, flourishing, in fact, like green bay trees throughout the land. There came a time, indeed, when the Episcopal Church in Virginia began to fall off alarmingly in membership and the other churches to gain. The most notable of the renegades was Councillor Robert Carter of

Nomini Hall in Westmoreland, a grandson of King Carter. This blue-blooded turncoat first went over to the Baptists, later adopted the Swedenborgian belief, and finally became a Roman Catholic—somersaulting into the Kingdom, as it were, but perfectly sincere in all his shifts, and suffering a sort of mild martyrdom straight along, since the rest of his social and religious world grew more horrified with each fresh gyration.

Mary Ball must have heard much talk about nonconformity and lack of social standing, and no doubt was profoundly influenced by it, as she was by everything during those first impressionable years of her life. At that period, however, youth—certainly female youth—was supposed to be utterly unsophisticated. It must not put questions, since children should be seen and not heard; but there is a large probability that children managed to hear when not seen, and that the small Mary, tucked away in some corner of a candle-lighted room, worked many an ecclesiastical, social, and faintly political conviction into the text of her samplers.

So far as the holiness of aristocracy and the infallibility of the Church of England were concerned, Virginians drew in those doctrines with their first breath. Mary Ball knew without being told in so many words that when she had a husband (it never entered her head that she might not have him), he would be a Carter, a Randolph, a Washington, a Page, or the representative of some other "first family." She was also aware that the Thirty-Nine Articles embodied all that was necessary to

her soul's salvation. It is to be doubted whether she bothered much about any of those ideas, but they were all there, safely lodged in her flaxen pate, and they helped to make the pattern of her life.

The Sunday morning service at one of those old parish churches was the focal point of the entire week. The whole Episcopal neighborhood gathered beneath the pulpit, which was as large as a throne, hung with turkey red, and reached by a circular stairway. The "county" families sat in their hereditary pews and the lesser folk nearer the door or in back galleries (all not being safe, as yet, for democracy). The least of the lot, the African slaves, were stowed away somewhere, having been brought in willy nilly, though generally willy, for then as now they were innately religious. Most of them, no doubt, racked their woolly heads to know what it was all about, but some knew instinctively and so were altogether capable of gathering up the crumbs that fell their way. Bishop Meade tells of an old woman slave in the upper Northern Neck who had been piously reared and brought to church every Sunday. She became, he says, "so attached to the place and mode of worship that after the church was deserted of ministers and people, and her fellow servants were going to other meetings and joining in other ways of praying, she used regularly to go to the old place and sit upon one of the naked sleepers by herself . . . . she said it did her more good to go to the old church and think over the old prayers she was used to than to go into any of the new ways."

Here we perceive the good Bishop dealing a heavy backhanded lick to the Evangelicals; but it is true that the negroes were faithfully brought to church and became strongly attached to the ritual—largely, perhaps, because of its sonorous rhythm, so dear to the African heart.

The church that Mary Ball attended during much of her childhood and girlhood was Yeocomico, named for the little river that flowed nearby on its way to the Potomac, and still standing to the present day. It was a new church when Mary was born; the date of its erection, 1706, carved over the door, is legible now. The parish was called, inexplicably enough, Cople—a Celtic word properly spelled Copple and signifying in Cornwall a kind of vessel used for refining metals. Poetically speaking, that might be a suitable enough name for a religious centre in a wild new land where souls were to be tried as in a crucible, but the appellation could scarcely have come in that way. Perhaps it was an echo from the naming of a parish farther up the Potomac—Truro, called after the Cornish port from which tin and copper ore was shipped.

Yeocomico church, built roughly in the shape of a cross, stood not far from the main road in a grove of trees. Some of the oaks that shade it today were saplings then. It was surrounded by a brick wall with narrow gateways, and it had a Gothic chancel window and brick-paved aisles. The upper part of the cross was represented by a spacious porch where the congregation was

accustomed to gather for a little gossip before the service began. Philip Fithian, the young Presbyterian tutor at Nomini Hall in the days when Councillor Carter was still an Episcopalian, grew very querulous about that habit of the Virginians, but nothing could stop it. Many and many a time the little Ball girl must have tarried at the vestibule door with the rest, listening to talk of the weather and the crops, hearing the week's budget of news, rumors from New England, from the frontier, from across the ocean, gathering a tidbit now and then of neighborhood gossip. The worshipers had come from many miles away; there was much to be told, and the Church of England service was so long that there would be little time afterward for the telling. So they lingered in the porch until the minister's voice reminded them that the Lord was in his holy temple and that they should be there too. There was a graveyard near the church which slowly, as the years went by, was to become the sleeping-place of throngs of Mary's kin and kin-in-law; and there was a sundial in the yard, and a short distance away, down a slope, a spring of cold water with a ladle-dipper that had been presented by one of the vestrymen. Often on scorching Sundays the child must have scampered down to that spring, when the discourse had been unusually dry, and taken a long draught from the common dipper. And many a time she must have leaned on the sundial and tried to puzzle out the mystery of its measured shadow.

For the first twelve years of her life the rector was

the Reverend William Scrimgour, and after that she was shepherded by one Lawrence De Butts, who rode over to Cople parish, then vacant, from his own Washington parish, to administer the Lord's Supper and to baptize, marry, preach, and conduct the burial service. He ministered also to Farnham church in Richmond County and to St. Stephen's in Northumberland, where Captain Richard Hewes had served on the vestry. Since Washington parish alone was thirty miles long and five miles wide, the rector, unless he had an assistant, must have apportioned his Sundays among the four churches.

It is not likely that Mr. De Butts had to compose a new sermon more than once a month; the churches were so far apart that there could have been slight danger of an overlapping of congregations. Mrs. Hewes and her little girl, it is true, may occasionally have heard him repeat himself, for they doubtless went now and then to one of the churches in Washington parish, Westmoreland, just across the Yeocomico. One of the earliest churches in that parish, Appomattox, had once had a gift of a gorgeous altar cloth from Lawrence Washington, the grandfather of George Washington. It made the dark, damp interior of the building shine in a wonderful way as long as it lasted, but one cold night some impecunious wayfarer stole it and made himself a pair of breeches out of it. This was a disaster as well as a sacrilege, for those old places of worship were unwarmed and unlighted except by the beauty of the chancels.

If the young Mary Ball attended service in Washing-

ton parish, tucked in demurely between her mother and her favorite sister, Elizabeth Bonhum, she is bound to have rested her eyes, many a time, on the head of her future husband, showing above the high back of the Washington pew. For he was there Sunday after Sunday, a tall, grave young man, with his delicate young wife and their three children. But since this could mean nothing to her at the time, she probably sat in a sort of bored contentment, hearing vaguely the preacher's dull sermon. It was good to be young and hearty in the best section of a fine new country, surrounded by, and a part of, the pick of the land, with a romantic adventurer for Governor and George the First king of England. No doubt she bowed her bright head and prayed as hard as anybody else for the Hanover line—which, as matters turned out, was to need all the prayers it could get, though more than Mary Ball would by that time see her way clear to offering.

So much for spiritual instruction. The rest of her education was far more meagre. In the first few decades of the eighteenth century Virginia girls came very slowly and sedately by such education as they received. There were no public schools, of course, nor would the "quality" have patronized them even if there had been, and no organized private schools, and no young ladies' seminaries. A finishing school, since there was seldom anything begun, would have been an anomaly. The daughters of plantation owners, with their brothers, were taught at home by tutors. Sometimes a few rooms at

some rich gentleman's house were used as a private school, with an unmarried clergyman for teacher, or a divinity student, and with pupils gathered from among the upper families of the neighborhood. In 1699, and perhaps for some time thereafter, no one was allowed to be a teacher of youth who did not hold a commission from the Bishop of London.

Mary Ball had a tutor, a serious-minded person by the name of Thomas Baker, who is described for posterity by no less an authority than George Washington, in the following words: "'Thomas Baker was a man of refined character, and devoted much of his leisure, of which he had a good deal, in guiding my mother in religious knowledge, which her mind was naturally inclined to receive, as also in directing her studies in such other branches of instruction as he deemed most fitting and likely to serve in the education of her children. He was in the habit of reading translations of the portions of the best classic authors, and which he was very apt in making interesting by contrasts with modern writers."

We could wish that Mary Ball's son had been a little more specific. It would be interesting to know whether Baker was old or young, where he hailed from, and what he looked like. But at that period the concrete was in great disfavor; stilted abstractions, on the other hand, were considered the very stuff of good literary composition, and it is not strange that the color of the tutor's eyes and hair was not recorded—though it is a safe guess that his girl pupil knew, to the exact shade. But

we wonder how the young teacher came to have such abundant leisure, though his biographer may have been here unwittingly hypercritical. To one who has done hill-country surveying, crossed icebound rivers, led armies, and had five horses shot under him in one engagement, it must have seemed strange to think of sitting placidly under colonial oaks teaching a little girl her three R's.

However that may be, the tutor seems to have been a success in some ways. That he never could, as future evidence showed, make his pupil spell correctly need not be held against him, for at that time and for long after orthography was a charmingly flexible art. One spelled by ear, and the eye accommodated itself to the result. In fact, there was no authorized standard at all. People treated words as today they treat their own names—spelling them as they chose. There is not much chance that Thomas Baker himself would have spelled two words in ten as we spell them now.

Under this teacher Mary probably learned the Church catechism, and it may possibly have been he who started her in Sir Matthew Hale's "Moral and Divine Contemplations", the volume with which she made significant contact not many years later, and which is said to have had such a lasting effect on her life. If she read Sir Matthew then she must have gone far beyond her depth, for the paragraphs are long and stilted and stolid to a degree. But in that age there was a profound conviction that to make religion attractive would be to destroy its influence,

and so she waded on, like any other little colonial in spiritual waters. The Virginians were not Puritans, but, for all their cavalier blood, they had a strong Puritan slant. Mary Ball most probably danced and played cards and did other things that would have spelled perdition for a Massachusetts girl; nevertheless her sponsors saw to it that when she read about the love of God she read through a glass darkly.

In the year that Mary was fourteen the Bishop of London sent a circular to the Virginia clergy with various questions as to the state of educational facilities in their midst. To one query, "What religious books have you?" the answer was, "We have the Book of Homilies, The Whole Duty of Man, and The Singing Psalms." It is safe to assume that Thomas Baker's pupil was well acquainted with these three volumes. She was instructed also, as we know, in the whole duty of woman. There is a certain lively and legitimate interest in wondering whether among the books that were to prove of assistance in the training of her children any of the titles touched on the subject of military tactics.

There was a governess at one period, too, the account goes on to say, a French lady of Huguenot family. Her name is not given, but she was undoubtedly a representative of one of the numerous families that had used Virginia as a haven from terrible persecution. There is a probability that her surname was Jaquelin or Ambler.

The two commentators, George Washington and Thomas Baker, managed between themselves, and in

spite of their stiffness, to draw a very pretty picture of Mary Ball. "This most excellent man," Washington goes on gravely, "derived very real pleasure in these labors of love," (from which it would appear that the amiable man was a gentleman of leisure in truth, and gave his services), "as he was pleased to speak of my mother as 'the most amiable yet the most impressionable character I have ever known, a girl of great personal attractions and yet utterly unconscious of their possession.' "

We doubt whether any young female ever had a more delicate and delicious tribute paid to her. On the strength of that testimony it is safe to assume that Mary Ball knew a happy girlhood.

Cousins were legion in Virginia, then as now, and she had her full share of them. As a matter of fact, owing to her peculiar position on the family tree, a misplaced twig set far along on a branch already plentifully betwigged, she had far more than her share. As time went by the near relations became almost uncountable. She could claim forty-eight first and second cousins before she was grown, and at least fifteen nephews and nieces. That was on the Ball side alone. If Mary Hewes left brothers and sisters in England, then the count of cousins was greatly increased. The number in Virginia seems specially remarkable when we consider that the elder Joseph Ball had only one brother and one sister—William, who inherited Millenbeck, and Hannah, who was cut off with five shillings and a dig in the ribs.

It must have meant a good deal to a little girl born out of due season, as it were, and more or less lonely in consequence, to find herself being continually presented with new nephews and nieces. For some obscure reason, girl children set immense store by that sort of thing, and this one was no doubt like the rest of her kind. Scarcely a year passed but what she was invested anew with the dignity of aunthood. The babies of her half sisters, small Traverses and Chinns and Conways, came along with beautiful regularity, some of them nicely timed to serve as playmates for Mary. Since the families lived within visiting distance each arrival meant pleasant excitement for the young aunt. Her brother Joseph, too, had children, but since he lived in England most of the time, she may have seen his olive branches only on the occasion when she went over with her mother for that short stay at Wokingham. One of them was Hetty Betty, born when Mary was eleven years old. Hetty Betty died very young, so young that in the family chronicle she is usually overlooked; but it can be safely assumed that the eleven-year-old aunt in far-away Virginia strutted a little over the honor of being aunt to so delectable a name.

This brother Joseph was his young sister's guardian through much of her adolescence. It is thought that he was educated in England, like his father before him, for he married there and for many years practiced law in London, making his residence at Stratford-by-Bow, which is no less a place than the Stratford-atte-Bowe of Chaucer's Canterbury tale. Apparently he claimed resi-

dence in both countries; at any rate he visited his colonial property over and over again and exercised here some of the rights of citizenship. It must have been on one of these visits when, moved to indignation by the doings of scapegrace clergymen whom England had found undesirable, he came forward with his praiseworthy scheme for the home education of candidates for the ministry. The entry on the county record runs:

> A proposal of Joseph Ball, gentleman, on behalf of himself and the rest of the inhabitants of Virginia, directed to the Honourable and General Assembly, concerning the instructing of a number of young gentlemen, Virginians born, in the study of divinity, at the county's charge, was this day presented in court by the said Joseph Ball, and on his prayer ordered to be certified to the General Assembly.

There is every indication that this brother of Mary's had a strong affection for her, and that it lasted throughout their lives. Joseph Ball, gentleman, was a grave, dignified sort of fellow, taking his responsibilities with almost undue seriousness, and he seems to have counted as a distinct responsibility this child of his father's middle age. Very likely she seemed to him more like a daughter than a sister.

CHAPTER V

From the time she left Epping Forest until she was almost grown the girl's years flowed along evenly enough except for the interruption offered by that one trip across the sea. Looking after her simple affairs at Cherry Point, visiting her sister in Westmoreland, going to church at Yeocomico, and studying her lessons under Thomas Baker and the nameless French lady, she must have found life pleasant, even though a trifle dull at times. It is not probable that she took any large part in the social doings of the neighborhood and its adjacent counties. Her birth and breeding gave her every right to do so, but there is far more probability that, unable to keep up with the young Misses Carter and Lee in rich attire and coaching facilities, and being naturally domestic anyway, she put her chief activities into matters connected with farm life at Cherry Point and Bonhum's Creek. It is a safe guess that gardening and horseback riding were her main diversions and that she was beautifully deft with a hoe and more at home on a side saddle than she was even in a ball room. Nevertheless, that she liked social gaiety and had her

share of it now and then seems also pretty certain.

There is a legend that she was called "the Rose of Epping Forest" and "the Belle of the Northern Neck." It may be a legend with a foundation, for to be pretty and amiable and impressionable and at the same time unaware of your charms would indeed seem good warrant for any number of fine titles; but in the light of later years there is reason for believing that Mary Ball would herself have chosen housewifery rather than bellehood. She was born for the home, the garden, the farm, fields and woods; there was something primitive in this girl's nature that nothing ever altered, a certain intent and intense preoccupation with the enormous business of living—that is, with the actual task of producing and conserving life. As her record slowly unfolds for our reading, that becomes more and more plain.

Before her thirteenth birthday was long past, she had her first sorrow. In 1720, on a winter day, Mary Hewes made her last will and testament. Though three times a widow, she was still in early middle life. Women aged early then, even those who led comparatively easy lives. It was the decree of society that they should not stay young, a purely arbitrary ruling, but powerful in its application. Mary Johnson Ball's marriage to Capt. Richard Hewes had been a sort of Indian Summer romance, though she was less than forty at the time. There is no power like the power of suggestion; under the pressure of public expectation the poor colonial ladies did actually grow old long before their time, becoming settled of

countenance and grandmotherly of figure at thirty-five. After that, without a word, they meekly stowed themselves away on the "shelf" to which their spinster sisters of the same age had preceded them almost a decade before.

Mary Hewes, laboring with the heavy composition of her will on that dreary December day, seems wistful and overburdened, as though the weight of her two score years and ten were more than she could bear. "I . . . being sick and weary, but of sound mind and perfect memory . . . give and devise. . . . " The final document is full of an indescribable pathos. Though she is so near her end, each little article associated with everyday life seems to take on a strange importance. In spite of her three marriages, two of which, at least, had been what is commonly known as good matches, she appears to have had only a modest amount to will away. Most of the personal property goes to the child of her second venture. The rest of the estate is devised to John Johnson, her son by the first husband, with Elizabeth Bonhum inheriting it in the event of his death. That may have been much or little. The idea with regard to the younger daughter seems to have been that her paternal legacy of Rappahannock farm land would suffice to keep her comfortable.

It is plain, though, that in writing her will, the mother's mind was chiefly on this youngest child. All the way down the long list of "devisings", simple but precious personal possessions are carefully itemized for

Mary Ball's ownership. After bequeathing to the girl one young mare and her increase, "which mare I formerly gave her by word of mouth," and one good pacing horse, and making provision for the purchase of a silk plush side saddle and a likely young negro woman, the owner enumerates the household articles which were doubtless her principal pride, the homely, everyday stuff that means so much in the life of a woman on a lonely farm: "diaper" table linen, plates, pewter dishes, basins, one large iron pot, one frying pan, one old trunk. The items strike us as simple to the point of penury, but those were simple days when a little went a long way. In addition to these things Mary received the bed furniture that her father had said she was to have—curtains, fallens, a quilt and a pair of blankets. Most of her mother's wearing apparel, also, came to her, for dresses were handed down as carefully as slaves or real estate, and two gold rings, one a large loop and one "stoned."

Today there is something appalling in the cold-blooded way that the will lumps together a frying-pan and a young negro woman, but to the mind of that period it was the most natural thing in the world. Both were chattels, and, after all, the honor in which a frying pan was held made the association less invidious than it might sound.

Even the most casual reader can detect the earnest solicitude that has gone into the listing of those household treasures. It is plain that the landed property weighed far less in Mary Hewes' actual affections than

that beloved collection of common furnishings with which the girl was to set up her own housekeeping. The mind of a colonial woman was but little on such matters as real estate; her interest centered on smaller and more intimate things. It is not strange that when Mrs. Hewes came to die, pots and pans crowded to the foreground of her consciousness, nor that her main earthly concern was the proper disposal of such precious possessions as quilts and fallens.

For the rest, the sick woman put her young daughter into the hands of their good neighbor, George Eskridge; Joseph Ball, the girl's brother and former guardian, was the width of the ocean way, and doubtless it seemed best that someone near at hand should be chosen to look after her lonely interests. So the master of Sandy Point farm, "trusty and beloved friend," was made her guardian, and as time went on he proved true to his trust.

Then Mary Hewes, her Montague blood running more and more wearily, her somewhat venturesome life drawing steadily to its close, finished the fatiguing document and set her sign and seal above the sign and seal of four accommodating neighbors. A few months later she was gathered to her somewhat vaguely defined fathers. Her dust could not be sent back to mingle with theirs in the old country, and so she was laid to rest instead in a flowery acre behind Epping Forest, the place that had been her first home in a strange land. Perhaps she had asked to be buried there instead of in the graveyard of St. Mary's White Chapel.

The young orphan went to live, after that, with her sister and brother-in-law, the Samuel Bonhums, a few miles away, over the border of lower Westmoreland. The course of her destiny was slowly drawing her northwestward, up and up through the Northern Neck, that roomy peninsula that was to prove the background of all her story. The Bonhums were good to her, and she spent much time, also, with the family at Sandy Point, finding a special companion in Sarah Eskridge, who was of her own age and who no doubt had a pacing horse and a plush silk saddle of her own and made a joyful companion for many a dashing ride over the county border and back. There must have been many such rides. Small wonder that the owner of the young mare and the good pacer became the mother of one of the world's most indefatigable horsemen!

So she went on with the rest of her youth, growing in moral and physical stature under the free country skies that she loved, a lonely young thing, in a way, but no doubt happy and wholesome.

A letter has come down through the centuries, ragged and frail, but legible enough to the careful eye, bearing the signature Mary Ball and a date which coincides perfectly with the girlhood of this Mary of Epping Forest and Bonhum's Creek. For a long time it was taken for granted that she was the writer. But if that is true, there are discrepancies in the text that are hard to explain. The communication purports to be addressed to Joseph Ball of England—and if there is no mistake about that point,

then the mystery offered by the contents is well-nigh distracting. This, with the spelling revised, is the letter, or the part of it that remains:

> We have not had a schoolmaster in our neighborhood until now in nearly four years. We have now a young minister living with us who was educated at Oxford, took orders, and came over as assistant to Rev. Kemp of Gloucester. That parish is too poor to keep both, and he teaches school for his board. He teaches Sister Susie and me, and Madam Carter's boy and two girls. I am now learning pretty fast. Mamma and Susie and I all send love to you and Mary. This from your loving sister,
>
> Mary Ball

There are four immense difficulties here. The first, and it seems at the outset insuperable, is the mention of her mother. The letter is dated January 14, 1723, and at that time Mrs. Hewes had been dead for eighteen months. This being the case, the only possible inference is that the girl had come to call someone else mother, which, of course, is not likely: at fourteen a child would not be quick to fall in with so radical a change of habit as that would involve. If this one did, there is a possibility that the person referred to was Mary Daingerfield Ball, the second wife of Major James Ball, Mary's first cousin, but old enough to be her father. Mary had a warm affection for her relatives at Bewdley; years afterward, when she had a child herself, it was her first impulse to show him at once—he was eminently well worth showing, but nobody knew that then—to these favorite cousins. It may be that when Mrs. Hewes died, Mary

Daingerfield Ball extended to the little girl a sort of loving adoption. Still, if Mrs. Ball of Bewdley was the "mother" of the letter, who was "Susie"? For, inconveniently enough, there was no child in the family by that name. Nor in the almost endless roster of Mary Ball's cousins and nieces can the name be found.

A minor worry is the statement about the young tutor. Washington's account of his mother's teachers seems to take no note of any man teacher except Baker, and it is scarcely he who is meant. Moreover, no clergyman by the name of Kemp can be uncovered in any of the parish records of Gloucester county, though he has been sought for almost with tears. Nor do the records bear out the remark concerning the poorness of the Gloucester parish; according to the church records, the Virginia parish at that period was in nowhere near so parlous a state as to be unable to take care of a curate. Again, if the mysterious tutor was teaching for his board in Westmoreland, he could have done but scant pastoral work in the more southern county, since the two places are miles apart, not to mention the width of the Rappahannock between them. Undertaking one of these tasks must necessarily have meant resigning the other.

And last, though perhaps least, stands the question, who was the Mary of the message in the letter? Joseph Ball's wife and only surviving daughter were both named Frances.

Yet when all has been said, though that is a good deal, the letter went to Joseph Ball of England, and it was

signed Mary Ball. There may have been a number of Mary Balls in Lancaster, for more than one settler by that name had come over, but there is not much chance that any of them except Mary of Epping Forest would have been writing to Joseph Ball at Stratford-by-Bow. If only this Mary with whom our country is concerned had written more letters and given more details when she did write, what a store of treasure we should have! Thomas Baker, however, thought less about the art of composition that he did about comparative literature and essays on child-rearing, and the Huguenot lady's heart was elsewhere than on her task, perhaps in France, where it belonged; so we are left to do a good deal of guessing. If they had known what immortal material they had in their clutch—Baker, and the French person, and perhaps the Oxford don—what haste they would have made to mould it in fine fashion and stamp it with their separate dies! But doubtless the world is better off, after all, that she was left in her natural ore, for that is the way, unmistakably, that Mary Ball Washington was intended to remain.

Although she was so domestic by nature, however, the girl was doubtless like all other girls in being ready for youthful fun. And she probably found it with marked success. The name "Belle of the Northern Neck" must have had some warrant. It is likely that the expert young horsewoman was an expert dancer as well, and that if the Hewes plantation did not boast a carriage, she took more than one jolty trip to some ball or tourna-

ment in the coach of a neighboring family, bumped about in her party dress along with laughing companies of young Lees and Tayloes. It is not at all improbable that her excursions now and then, anyway, took her much farther away.

Eastern Virginia was immensely social all up and down its three long peninsulas and south of the James as well. In spite of the difficulties of travel in those slow and spacious days the inhabitants of the three Necks managed to do much visiting among themselves. The so-called first families were marked by a certain dyed-in-the-wool clannishness. This had two underlying and, for the most part, unconscious motives. One was the aristocrats' impulse to hold together against the encroachments, social, political and religious, of what they were pleased to term the lower classes. The second motive grew out of the first. Blue blood must on no account suffer dilution from plebeian blood; but on the other hand, neither must it be allowed to run too blue and too thick. They did not know much about biology in those days, but they knew that. Pages could not go on indefinitely marrying Carys, nor Harrisons, Randolphs, nor Turbervilles, Lees. So, even though the roads might be axle-deep in mud, as they always were from October to May, young suitors regularly mounted their horses and rode like Lochinvar, and family coaches rocked down the highways between the four rivers carrying demure young ladies to all kinds of festivities—and, incidentally, to their fates.

There was a swarm of these blooded beaux and belles for it was very fashionable to have large families; in fact there was a kind of opprobrium attached to the meagre household. The huge manor-houses must be filled,—what else were they for?—the hordes of servants must be given employment. A baby a year was the normal procedure. And by the time the last of the lot arrived, the first two or three had grown up and were established in newer manor-houses having families of their own. This resulted in regular dynasties.

Down at Corotoman in Lancaster, King Carter had fifteen young Carters before he considered his tribe well rounded out. He was a great mogul, that old Robert Carter, ruling his household in lordly fashion and ruling also, in his own right, large portions of the Northern Neck. In parish and county he was a power to be reckoned with. His father had built Christ Church, and when the edifice was destroyed he himself built another on the same site. When the parish register was signed Carter's name led all the rest. It took one fourth of the church building on Sundays to accommodate the Corotoman tenants and servants alone. The family proper occupied an immense hereditary pew near the chancel. Tradition says that no one else in the congregation sat at all until the Carter coach arrived and the Carters, headed by King, led the way in.

Farther up, in Westmoreland, Thomas Lee was master of Stratford and Colonel John Tayloe of the "Old House" that later gave place to Mount Airy. Among

other county families were the Taliaferros, the Newtons, the Masons, the Ludwells. Most important of all in Mary Ball's destiny and in the destiny of America was the family at Pope's Creek, on the Potomac, where Augustine Washington ran the plantation that he had inherited from his father.

At the time that Mary was growing up the two more southerly Necks, the one lying between the Rappahannock and the York and the one lying between the York and the James, were well sprinkled with country homes, tobacco plantations, and growing towns. Richmond had not yet been founded, but Williamsburg, the capital, flourished, with a playhouse and a college; and Hampton, at the tip of that peninsula, the first English settlement in the United States that survived to the present day, was already a bustling town.

These rich river lands offered beautiful sites for homes, and the wealthier settlers had taken full advantage of their opportunity. Down on the York stood Carter's Grove, the seat of the Burwell family and not far distant the magnificent manor-house of Rosewell, built by Mann Page, Eton graduate, member of the Colonial Congress, and deft spender of a princely fortune. "Scotch Tom" Nelson, of Penrith, England, founder of Yorktown in 1705, had built for himself the first brick house ever seen in that section and lived there in thrifty content. When that brick house rose on its solid foundations not Scotch Tom nor any one else had an inkling of what was to happen at Yorktown farther along in the century. The

yellow broom flower that today brightens the entire peninsula in autumn was unfamiliar then; that audacious perennial seeded itself, so the tale runs, from the English hay brought over for the horses of my Lord Cornwallis's army.

Down in the green scallops of the James were Westover, home of William Byrd and his heart-broken Evelyn; Brandon, built by Nathaniel Harrison; Shirley, the heritage of the noted wit and beauty, Elizabeth Hill, in Mary's girlhood the bride of a Carter of Corotoman. Amblers and Jaquelins, Burwells and Carys and Blairs, with scores of other fine old families, were sprinkled along the shores of the York and the James. William Randolph of Turkey Island, the King Carter of the south peninsula, lived not far below the present Richmond. He had seven sons and two daughters. The girls married Gloucester County men. For his sons he built fine manors; most of them went by the names of their stately homes: William II of Turkey Island, Richard of Curls Neck, Thomas of Tuckahoe, Isham of Dungeness. William was a member of the Council and Treasurer of the Colony; Isham a member of the House of Burgesses and Adjutant-General of the Colony; Sir John, who achieved an English knighthood, was Speaker of the House of Burgesses and Attorney-General; Richard was a member of the House of Burgesses and at one time Treasurer of the Colony. Their sons carried on the family tradition and the family capacity for increase.

And thick within the curve of a great arc drawn north-

west of the Northern Neck for two hundred miles stood other splendid homes, many of which were to figure prominently in the life history of Mary Ball. Down in King William County, between the York and Paumunky Rivers, William Dandridge was laying the foundations of Elsing Green; his niece was to marry Mary Ball's oldest son. Up on the Rappahannock opposite Fredericksburg stood Chatham, the Fitzhugh seat. Chatham was built by the son of William Fitzhugh, the founder of the family in Virginia. This first Fitzhugh had taken his bride from Mary's Westmoreland, a little Miss Tucker, aged eleven; she had to be packed off to England promptly after the ceremony to be educated. The Fitzhughs also owned Marmion in King George, a house built in the reign of Charles the Second and standing sturdily to this day. Marmion passed in time into the possession of Mary Ball's grandson.

Thus up and down the Northern Neck and all up and down Tidewater Virginia, the web of life was weaving, weaving for this tall, bright-faced young girl who had no idea that there was anything in store for her but country duties and horseback rides and sermons at Yeocomico, with now and them a tournament or a dance somewhere thrown in for great good measure.

CHAPTER VI

So the years of childhood and girlhood went past; they were to prove for Mary Ball the easiest of all her years. The times, so far as she was concerned, seemed fairly peaceful. News from afar that dribbled in through slow report and slower newsletters did not indicate any great commotion in the outside world. England was taking a holiday from active warfare, though she still kept up her bickering with France over the question of American boundaries. Out of those same boundaries the westward faring settlers struggled on against the French and Indians, whose friendship was fast becoming firmly cemented. Across the Atlantic the South Sea bubble swelled and broke; other lesser excitements had their day; the countries of the European continent plotted and counterplotted, brawled, and broke sporadically into open fighting. But along the Potomac and the Rappahannock all was quiet.

When Mary Ball had barely passed twenty she lost another watchful protector, for Samuel Bonhum, her brother-in-law, died. His going must have served to strengthen the dependence of the two sisters upon each

other. There had been a tie, too, between Bonhum himself and his wife's young sister, for we find him willing her in kindly fashion a dapple-gray riding horse, no small mark of favor in those days when horses meant wealth and pleasure and the one and only way of covering ground. From first to last the girl fared well at the hands of her family. Her half brother, John Johnson, who did not long outlive his mother, had left her property. So had her stepfather, Captain Hewes, concerning whom word has come down to later generations that "he was good to his stepchildren."

Mary's three horses no doubt carried her over many a mile to neighborhood frolics. Probably she went even farther afield. A light-hearted young girl of her social standing must have taken some little part, at least, in social pleasures outside of her own immediate region. It was every Virginia girl's ambition, at that period, to have a glimpse anyway of the State Capital and attend a play at the theater there, the only playhouse in the land. Whether Mary ever got as far as the metropolis, we cannot be sure. But again there crops up a tantalizing old letter, a letter which being interpreted may mean that she did on one occasion at least.

In the autumn of 1722 the casual post bore away from Williamsburg to another point in the State a message which is still the subject of endless speculation. Between its first fading, frazzled word and its last Mary Ball seems actually to materialize before our gaze. The Williamsburg girl who wrote the letter was plainly agog to

tell some young correspondent about a third girl who had recently been a guest in the town. Now, Williamsburg must have been well accustomed to visitors; thither flocked the pick of Virginia statesmanship and the flower of Virginia society. As the seat of William and Mary College, moreover, it was very popular with young ladies of the day, holding a place in their affections that can only be compared to the place held in modern young affections by Annapolis and West Point. That this letter should have confined itself to singing the praises of a single girl is enduring testimony to that girl's charm.

The message runs, as joyfully as a brook over pebbles:

> Dear Sukey, Madam Ball of Lancaster and Her Sweet Molly have gone Hom. Mamma thinks Molly the Comliest Maiden She Knows. She is about Sixteen yrs old, is taller than Me, is verry Sensable, Modest, and Loving. Her hair is like unto Flax, her Eyes are the color of Yours and her Chekes are like May blossoms. I wish you could see her.

We wish we could, too, or at any rate that we might know her to have been beyond doubt our own Molly Ball. But as in the other tantalizing letter, the several discrepancies make hard nuts for our cracking.

"Madam Ball" cannot, obviously, have reference to Mary Ball's own mother; the date and the surname both preclude that possibility. Here again, however, comes in the other possibility that a Ball kinswoman, perhaps the wife of Major James Ball, may have taken upon herself the motherly oversight of the young orphan. Madam

Ball of Bewdley, in Lancaster, would have had a great deal of prestige in both the Northern Neck and Tidewater Virginia. Even though she may not be the person referred to in the former letter—the one to Joseph Ball concerning the tutor—there is nothing to forbid the supposition that she may have played the chaperone for her young cousin by marriage.

It would seem, all things being considered, that in spite of a second irregularity, the statement as to the girl's age (which might have come from a simple misapprehension), the subject of the communication may have been in truth the real Mary Ball—who lived within driving distance of Williamsburg, who is known to have been fair-haired and blue-eyed, and who (we have it on unimpeachable testimony) was eminently sensible, modest, and loving.

One thing is sure, if the Molly who went "hom" from the college town leaving such a lovely impression was our own Mary Ball, then the picture that the latter's son and tutor combined to paint a little too drably is here finished off for us, in exquisite color and line and happy perspective.

A visit to the Virginia capital would have been a gala experience for Mary of Bonhum's Creek. The distance between her home and the lower James was nearly a hundred and fifty miles, though it is a well-known if unscientific fact that the miles between any college town and any other given point are subject to uncanny shrinkage. In any case it was a protracted journey; there must

have been nights and days on the road with numerous stop-overs. Still, time was not at a premium in those tortoise-like days, and youth is hardy at any period, and in this particular instance there were great inducements at the far end of the road. If she did go, she went in high feather and all a-flutter.

It would be only natural for a girl of her era and environment to set large store by a ball or a trip. Between the time of their schooldays—meagre as education then was—and the time of their marriage colonial girls had only a small range of interests. The daughters of wealthy men, surrounded as they were by servants, were given few if any household tasks. They were diligently trained in certain polite accomplishments such as fancy needlework, painting in water colors, and plucking thin romantic tunes from the harpischord, and they sewed endless ruffles and attended to their flowers. But these delicate diversions, by their very nature, must have palled easily. So that when the hour came round to step into the family chariot and roll off to a merrymaking, the young ladies no doubt went with all promptness, in solemn state, but gayly.

The girl on Bonhum's Creek farm had, it is to be imagined, no family chariot to travel in and had certainly a chance to be much more practical than her dilettante young neighbors, but she no doubt loved fun in the same wholesome way, and took it eagerly enough when the chance offered. Her home life was necessarily simple. If she had stayed on at Epping Forest her water-color

pictures might have been more numerous and her harpsichord repertoire fuller; but neither her stepfather nor her brother-in-law was a rich man, comparatively speaking, and in each of those households there must have been limitations and plenty of hard work. No doubt Mary did her share of the work; there is excellent proof later on of her sound training in housewifery. When she was an old woman, as all the world knows now, the Marquis de Lafayette lunched with keen appreciation on her best gingerbread.

But though she may have been an expert cook even as far back as those early Westmoreland days, no doubt she came out of the kitchen whenever she was bidden to a ball. The dances of those days were joyous and graceful exercises, significant without being suggestive, each as much a game as a dance. The merrymakers were able to achieve a lovely rhythm independent of syncopation and contortions. There was no echo of the tomtom in the music furnished by flute and harpsichord, and the immense rooms of the period provided ample space for even the most fashionable huge skirts in minuet, quadrille, and other elaborate old dances.

Most of those dances were the outgrowth in one modification or another of the old English kissing games. In the simplest form of the kissing dance a gentleman would dance up to his chosen lady with a cushion, place it before her, and then, when she demurred, inform the musician that she would not come. The latter would insist that she must, whereupon it was her duty, after kissing

her suitor, to dance with the cushion to another man and go through the same performance.

The kissing element was perhaps eliminated in Virginia, where the ardent cavalier blood was a little cooled by Puritan influence, but none of the playful picturesqueness of the dance itself was lost. Mary Ball and her companions probably cared most for the Sir Roger de Coverley, that spontaneous dance tingling with the joy of life, wherein two rows of young people faced each other and crossed and recrossed until every youth had danced with every girl. The minuet was another favorite, full of stateliness and decorum and spelling out slowly with its courteous advances and coy retreats all the chivalry of man toward woman and the shy response of woman to man.

Mary Ball had height and slenderness, blue eyes and golden hair; when she stood waiting in the de Coverley or trod smiling down the slow-measured minuet, she must have made a picture that it was utterly beyond Thomas Baker's power to paint. Those were her first dances, slow-weaving figure and stately step, and she had many partners; when she went to her very last, it was leaning on the arm of a partner yet to be born, a tall, soldierly man in the blue and buff uniform of Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army of Virginia.

They had old echoes from England in those days, when it came to singing and harp-playing—"Black-Eyed Susan", airs from *The Beggars' Opera,* ancient ballads, and "Sally in Our Alley" set to the ancient tune

of "A Country Lass." Fithian mentions a favorite piece for the flute which Carter of Nomini Hall loved to play on summer evenings—"Water Parted from the Sea," a title that for all its ambiguity seems to brim, somehow, with the beauty of long-forgotten days. With the rise of the Georges came the influence of German music, though that change had scarcely had time to affect Virginia in Mary Ball's girlhood. But the airs she heard oftenest and probably loved best were the strange crooning spirituals and jumbled lullabies of the mellow-voiced slaves all around her.

Young women of her time came into very slight contact with literature. Books were scarce, even in many of the manor-houses, and for the most part they were afflictingly dull. Mary Ball could hardly have escaped hearing of Mr. Addison, for his work was sure to be in the library of any country gentleman who mixed a little reading with his incessant foxhunting. She may even have learned by heart, though she probably thought them too free-spoken, the long, sententious couplets of a certain Mr. Pope, the darling of the English fashionable world, whose skill in writing about ladies' curls must have been rumored even as far as Virginia. Daniel Defoe's name, with its delightful connotations, was in all likelihood unfamiliar; he belonged to the rabble. But she must have heard, at least, of Swift's writings, though they would no doubt have been considered meat far too strong for female youth. Mother Goose was known in New England, but the immortal ditties percolated slowly

southward, and probably Mary Ball lived and died—to her eternal loss—in ignorance of them. She knew "The Pilgrim's Progress," beyond doubt, and along with it many religious books of far less merit, stodgily written and well calculated to put any young reader to sleep on a rainy Sunday afternoon.

An advertisement in the Virginia *Gazette* of an eighteenth century date lists for sale a depressing collection of books. If Mary Ball saw any of these titles and read further, then she was a bookworm indeed and starving. The offer includes: "An Epistle Concerning the Epedemical Diseases of Virginia . . . wherein is shown the surprising Efficacy of the Seneca Rattle-Snake Root"; "The Church Catechism Explained"; "A Practical Discourse Concerning Death"; "The Whole Duty of Man: Laid Down in a Plain and Familiar Way for . . . the Meanest Reader"; "An Essay on the West Indian Dry Gripes." The last volume in the lot, "The Compleat Housewife or Accomplish'd Gentlewoman's Companion", may possibly have found its way to the little library on Bonhum's Creek.

Periodicals were practically unknown, and newspapers were in most homes very scarce. A copy of the London *Daily Journal* would be passed from hand to hand and from house to house until it was reduced to ribbons. The Virginia *Gazette* was better known, but even that had a sparse circulation.

The commonest way for news to be disseminated was by word of mouth, not a very reliable method, but at

least available. Letter-writing was even less a practise than it was an art. The foreign mail came in small sailing vessels from Falmouth, England; so slowly it came, and with such long-drawn-out uncertainty that it took on a kind of mythical value—the very term "mail-packet" was fraught with magic. As for the domestic postal service, letters came and went as best they could, and it was a poor service at its finest. Mary Ball was thirty years old before a regular system was in operation between New England and the James River. A letter mailed in Philadelphia would reach Williamsburg a week later. The arrival of a communication by post was an event eagerly welcomed and long remembered by the ordinary mortal. It was such an event, indeed, that in the face of all difficulties a few persons wrote letters assiduously, for there was an element of fascination in thus casting bread upon the mysterious waters of the postal service; after a great many days it might—possibly—return.

One recreation of the time, if no other, must have served as a potent antidote for dissertations on the whole duty of man and essays on the West Indian dry gripes, —the sport of hunting down wild ponies. Robert Beverley, the historian, gives us a lively description of it. No horses had ever been seen in eastern America until, to the great edification of the Indians, they were brought over by Europeans. The four-legged immigrants once here increased at such a rate that neither Indians nor English could keep up with them. As a result the country regions

were soon full of little wild horses, foaled in the woods and feeding freely on the uplands. "As shy as any savage creature," Beverley comments, writing in the very midst of them. "These, having no mark upon them, belong to the first that takes them. However, the captor commonly purchases these horses very dear, by spoiling better in the pursuit, in which case he has little to make himself amends, besides the pleasure of the chase. And very often this is all he has for it; for the wild horses are so swift that 'tis difficult to catch them, and when they are taken 'tis odds but their grease is melted, or else, being old, they are so sullen that they can't be tamed.'

Now there is a possibility, though it is barely more, that young Miss Ball may once or twice have known the joys of wildhorse hunting. She was a good rider and had three horses in her stable before she was twenty. If girls were allowed to go on those vigorous hunts, then this one, certainly, was well equipped for the sport. The owner of so much good horseflesh would hardly need any more, but it is safe to believe, reading backward along her life, that if she got a shadow of a chance to go racing over the countryside after shaggy ponies, she took it.

There is a heavy probability, of course, that colonial mothers deemed the pastime too indelicate for young ladies, and that colonial fathers did not fancy having their stable horses worn out over the business of "melting the grease" of wild colts. All that can be known with certainty is that if no ban was put on the sport, spinets and

watercolors were left with alacrity, and for a hilarious hour now and then blue blood ran red in the wake of melting grease.

Anyhow, Mary Ball's dapple gray was active more than once in a politer form of hunting, for the fox-hunt was a favorite diversion of the time, for girls as well as their brothers. As the property of a lady he did not get a chance to take part in another kind of run—the brief, breathless race after tournament rings; but his mistress rode him to many a tournament, it is to be imagined—and perhaps rode away crowned as queen of love and beauty, after the romantic fashion of that time—and of a far later time, for to this day in the Northern Neck young knights gallop through the lists and bring back crowns for their chosen ladies: the old English blood still courses strong enough for that.

A girl who had tournaments and hunts and neighborhood dances to enjoy, and who perhaps went once or twice to Williamsburg, meeting the College students and seeing a real play in a real playhouse, had a blithe life of it, no matter how many homely duties were upon her. Small wonder if Molly Ball of Epping Forest and Cherry Point and Bonhum's Creek had cheeks the color of May blossoms!

The writer of that disputed letter might easily have told us, while she was at it, what "Sweet Molly" wore. It is hard to push a quill pen over rough paper, but a few more details would have been intensely gratifying. Women's dress at that date was so extravagant that pro-

digious is the only word for it; nevertheless a young and pretty girl can carry off the worst fashions ever invented. The hoop petticoat had come in, an old style revived. Over it was worn a gown with wide folds that billowed out from the hips and a rigid bodice with short, wide-ended sleeves; these were set off by a lace cap with lappets and a coquettish little lace apron with no function at all except to look absurd. The bodice was so tight and the bell of the petticoat so vast that certain men writers were moved to unholy mirth; one of them declared that the wearers looked like children in go-carts. The force of the simile has weakened with time, but we can well imagine what he meant. Up in New England the Puritan elders were exasperated rather than amused. They had long busied themselves with legislation against the follies of woman's dress, and now and then, goaded past endurance, they broke out into acrid abuse.

Madam Knight, the astounding lady who about that time rode horseback unchaperoned from Boston to New York, dressed for the ride without reference to the elders. She wore, it seems, a petticoat of green drugget cloth with puffed and ruffled sleeves, a scarlet cloak, and a round cap of Lincoln green. Her leather shoes had high heels and great velvet bows, and a riding mask of black velvet, such as only high ladies wore, was over her eyes. If there were no hoops in the drugget-cloth petticoat, we may rest assured that it was for the sake of convenience and not in deference to Puritan opinion.

In New England the stronger sex continued to regard

the strange styles as a breach of morals rather than of taste. One clothes dealer, torn between cupidity and principle, had much ado to square the matter with his conscience. "Hoop Skirts for Sale," he advertised in large capitals, "arraigned and condemned by the Light of Nature and the Law of God."

Another writer in a burst of spleenful eloquence compares the hoop petticoat with the dome of St. Paul's. Having rushed in where any angel would fear to go, he got his deserts. A lady came back at him promptly with a spirited thrust, comparing man in his modish long-tailed coat to "the Monument" and rounding that out with a damning list of other sartorial absurdities such as cuffs to the arm-pits, long pointed shoes, harness-sized buckles, and toupee wigs. It is safe to assume that at that point the correspondence stopped.

In Virginia men took their women's vagaries with more calmness. Colonel John Lewis of Gloucester County —his son was to marry Mary Ball's daughter—ordered in 1727 a large list of furbelows for his ward at boarding-school, and with no apparent scorn of its feminine foolishness. This is the outfit, perhaps a replica of Mary's own wardrobe that same year, for she was then just twenty:

A cap ruffle and tucker, 1 pair White Stays, 8 pair White Kid gloves, 2 pair colored kid gloves, 2 pair worsted hose, 3 pair thread hose, 1 pair silk shoes laced, 1 pair morocco shoes,

1 Hoop Coat, 1 Hat, 4 pair plain Spanish shoes, 2 pair calf shoes, 1 mask, 1 fan, 1 necklace, 1 Girdle and buckle, 1 piece fashionable calico, 4 yards ribbon for knots, 1½ yd. Cambric, 1 mantua and coat of lute-string.*

The most alluring item here is the stays. That article must have been of piquant fashioning. Benjamin Franklin, advertising a few years later for a number of garments stolen from his home, lists a pair of stays covered with white tabby before and dove-colored tabby behind.

The headdresses were foolish to a degree that was well-nigh alarming. One Massachusetts critic, shaken to angry sarcasm, speaks of them as "the highest point in female eloquence." Lumping all the obnoxious details in one mass he gives us a final effect not to be forgotten: lace and cambric, gauze and fringe, feathers and ribbons, and—crowning atrocity—horns. "The ornament of the hair which is styled the Horns," he adds acidly, "was certainly first calculated by some good-natured lady to keep her spouse in countenance."

Well, there is slight chance that Mary Ball wore horns on her bright hair and even less that she ever possessed eight pairs of shoes at once, like Lewis's spoiled young miss; but it is entirely possible that she sat at the feet of the Reverend Lawrence De Butts as well as she could in hoop petticoats and ruffled tucker—for all we know, with white tabby before and dove-colored tabby behind.

* Home Life in Colonial Days, p. 290.

Augustine Washington of Pope's Creek plantation no doubt saw her many Sundays dressed just that way, but never dreaming that one day he would have to pay for those hoop petticoats out of his own pocket, viewed her without alarm.

CHAPTER VII

However well-content Mary Ball at twenty may have considered herself riding horseback through three counties, the time was now drawing near for her to launch out on the real business of her long career. The story that her romance had its actual start in England is not without foundation. There is good evidence that she visited her brother at Stratford-by-Bow and other relatives at Cookham near London at about the time that Augustine Washington was in that vicinity looking after his ancestral property. The story goes on to say that Washington was injured in a carriage accident at the very gate of the place where Mary Ball was staying, and that she nursed him back to health, with the usual result.

This sounds almost too pat to be true, and yet it may be true, for such toward accidents do happen, at rare intervals, outside of fiction. It is known that Washington was in the neighborhood of Cookham around that time; only a few years ago a tree was still standing which residents said was planted by the Virginian while he waited for the settlement of his property. It may be that the

romantic casualty did occur, and that against the unusual background Washington saw in an entirely new light the young neighbor whom, in their ordinary contacts back in Westmoreland, he had scarcely even noticed.

This version of their courtship is upheld in striking fashion by a fragment of still another old letter. All three of these Mary Ball letters were found by a Union soldier, toward the end of the War between the States, in an abandoned house in Yorktown. With the best of intentions the finder gave the musty packet to the world; its contents have caused endless speculation and not a few headaches.

The third letter is scarcely more than a scrap, with its ink so faded that only a sentence and a half can be deciphered. The signature—"Lizzie Burwell"—is plain enough and the date, "May ye 15th, 1728"; but the name of the girl to whom it was addressed is roughly torn across, and also the name of the place from which it was sent. The superscription reads "Nellie Car. . . ."; of the place name nothing is left except the syllable "tank". The remnants of the text are irritating in their incompleteness. " . . . . understand Molly Ball is going Home with her Brother, a lawyer who lives in England. Her mother is dead three months ago, and her sister. . . . "

That is all, and it is not nearly enough. Yet this third letter in spite of its tantalizing raggedness would seem the most valuable of the trio as offering a possible reference to the real Mary Ball. But for one phrase, the old baffling reference to the mother, the fragment would offer no

difficulty at all; everything else seems to fit in with a fair degree of consistency.

Mary Ball of Epping Forest had only one brother at this time and he was a lawyer and lived in England. The word sister may have reference to any one of four or five women, particularly to the one who was so especially near to her. When the additional evidence is considered, that the girl and the young plantation owner were near London at the same time, the letter takes on distinct reliability. With Mary at Cookham visiting her cousins, Augustine there settling his estate, and Joseph Ball nearby, the scene is set for a very plausible outcome. Virginia clannishness would throw the brother and sister with their fellow countryman without any accident whatever; and it may easily have been that Ball was handling the legal end of Washington's business. The expression "her mother", is practically the only hitch. Here, for the third time, we must fall back on the theory that Mary had a sort of adopted mother. It is not an untenable theory, that much can be said; and it is well supported by the combined contents of the three letters.

If Mary Ball did go back from Virginia with her brother, as this particular letter states, it must have been some time after the writing of the letter. The intimation is plainly that she was about to go; yet Lizzie Burwell was writing in the spring of 1728, and in 1729 Joseph Ball is on record as being in Lancaster, making his prayer to the General Assembly for the education in Virginia of divinity students. He would hardly have

made two trips within so short a period. In those times, however, plans, like everything else, moved with prodigious leisure, and the writer might have made the announcement six months in advance without feeling that she was at all too forehanded.

Lizzie Burwell was perhaps that Elizabeth, granddaughter of King Carter, who later married President Nelson—often president of the Council and one-time president of the Colony—and became the mother of General Nelson of the Revolution. The future Madam Nelson spent much of her girlhood in Gloucester with her aunt, the wife of Mann Page. The Page home, Rosewell, was not more than fifty miles, as the crow flies, from the Northern Neck, and it stood very near both the Piankatank River and Propotank Creek, which might go far toward accounting for the forlorn syllable "tank" in the dubious letter. It may be that the Nellie addressed, of whose surname nothing remained but "Car . . ." was one of those small Carter girls who, according to the Sister Susie letter, were being taught in company with the Mary Ball of the same letter by a young Oxford tutor.

However all these things may be, one thing is certainly true, and that is that Mary Ball and Augustine Washington did fall in love somehow and somewhere, to the great good fortune of the world in general and of America in particular.

It was an even match, socially and otherwise. The Washingtons, like the Balls, came from fine English

stock; they traced their name back through various modifications—Wessyngton, Weshington, Wassington —and an even line of sturdy Englishmen prominent from the time of the Conquest. When the divine right of kings turned England upside down the Washingtons, like the Balls, had to suffer for their stubborn Stuart loyalty. Two of them, John and Lawrence, came to Virginia and took grateful hold in her friendly soil. John settled in Westmoreland County on a plantation called Pope's Creek, later on Wakefield, after a place in his native Yorkshire,—as English at heart as William Ball, clinging even in adversity to the old significant names of his mother country. He was the grandfather of Augustine Washington; he was the same man, also, who took action with Mary Ball's grandfather in the matter of getting the Bacon's Rebellion tax paid, back in 1676, exactly a century before a telling mixture of Ball and Washington blood should be boiling over again over the subject of taxes.

The seventeenth century was nearing its end when Augustine Washington, son of Lawrence and Mildred Warner Washington, was born. At the age of twenty-one he married Jane Butler, who was the daughter of a neighboring planter, and took her to the family home, Pope's Creek on the Potomac. He and his family were living there during the time that Mary Ball was with her step-father in Northumberland and, later, with her sister Elizabeth. The three Westmorelanders, Augustine and Jane Washington and little Mary Ball, must have

been at least fairly well acquainted through church and social contacts.

If only the good tutor, Thomas Baker, had interlarded his heavy instructions with lessons in how to keep a diary, we should hold him today in excessive esteem. The diary might have survived house-burning, as now and then one did, and we might have found in its time-fretted pages a description of some Sunday morning service at Yeocomico or at Pope's Creek church, with Mary in one pew and the Washingtons in the other, and perhaps Mary's impressions of the head of the family. But Baker, good man, was more keenly concerned with directing his pupil's attention toward the education of her future children than he was in providing a way whereby posterity might look upon their father. And as a matter of fact, neither he nor any one else can be blamed for not foreseeing this match; the master of Pope's Creek plantation was a family man, a vestryman, and a politician long before little Mary Ball's quaint dresses had reached the tops of her scalloped shoes.

The pair may have met rather frequently at the home of Major George Eskridge, situated not far from the Washington place and Cherry Point and only a mile or so from Bonhum's Creek. Mary no doubt spent much time in the family of her guardian, for Eskridge took a firm hold on his ward's affections. He was well fitted both by nature and by experience to be the guardian of a lonely child, for the hardships and desolation that he

had known in his younger days had served to broaden his sympathies.

His early history is more or less obscure, but the tale runs that while he was a youth in Wales and reading a law book one day on a deserted beach, he was seized by members of the Press Gang and carried away across the ocean. A Virginia planter bought him, and for eight years he toiled in virtual slavery, cut off from home and friends and treated with cruel harshness. On the last day of his term he arose betimes from his sleeping place, the kitchen hearth, picked up a mattock, and turned upside down the stones that had been his poor bed for so long. To the furious remonstrances of his master he replied with apt impudence that the departing guest was bound, in all courtesy, to make over his bed for the guest who should follow him. Then he slammed the door and was off. Shipping back across the sea he took up again the study which the Press Gang had so rudely interrupted, became in time a full-fledged lawyer, and then returned to Virginia, where he settled down in prosperity on a large grant and became a citizen of importance. There is little likelihood that he had known Mary Hewes when she was the widow Johnson in England. Their acquaintance probably dated from the year when, a stranger herself in a strange land, she came over to be the mistress of Epping Forest.

Mary Ball was twenty-two when she became engaged and so missed only by the narrowest margin being classi-

fied as an old maid. Eighteen was in those days the correct marrying age for a woman; girls who passed their twentieth year still unattached did so at their peril, for by that time the Shelf, that bleak depository of the unclaimed, loomed dangerously near. No matter how rosy their cheeks remained nor how bright their eyes, in the opinion of society—omnipotent then as now—they had stayed on the carpet too long, and good taste demanded their retirement. Cavalier and Puritan society might split on other issues, but on this they were in total accord.

Note the astonishment with which a New England writer regards one of these banished creatures who had managed to stay young:

> It is true, an *old* (or superannuated) maid in Boston is thought such a curse, as nothing can exceed it (and looked on as a *dismal spectacle*); yet she, by her good nature, gravity, and strict virtue, convinces all (so much as the fleering Beaus) that it is not her necessity, but her choice, that keeps her a Virgin. She is now about Thirty years (the age which they call a *Thornback*), yet she never disguises herself, and talks as little as she thinks of Love. She never reads any Plays or Romances, goes to no Balls, or Dancing-match, as they do who go (to such Fairs) in order to meet with Chapmen. Her looks, her speech, her whole behaviour, are so very chaste that but one at Governor's Island, where we went to be merry at roasting a hog, going to kiss her, I thought she would have blushed to death. . . . She knew Time was a dressing-room for Eternity, and therefore reserves most of her hours for better uses than those of the Comb, the Toilet, and the Glass.*

* Weedon, "Economic and Social History of New England," Vol. I, p. 299.

Whether Virginia girls were given a slightly longer rope than their sisters in Massachusetts we do not know. But Mary Ball was good-looking, and she knew how to cook, and she had an amiable disposition and a neat little dowry. Even at the advanced age of twenty-one she could not have been noticeably flouted by the "fleering Beaus." At any rate, she never reached the Shelf. She may have been, as her tutor testified, unaware of her own charms, but since the young widower on the Potomac in due course became convinced of them, and lost no time in acting on his convictions, all was well.

The year the girl settled down in an establishment of her own, Virginia was a fine and flourishing region, a pleasant enough land for any bride. The river plantations were growing good tobacco and shipping it to Europe for good returns; thousands of slaves and numerous white indentured servants furnished easy labor. By this time there had been a certain crude progress in the building of public roads, and great coaches drawn by four and six horses went rolling up and down the eastern coast and the three prosperous peninsulas. Under the warm sun and abundant rain, wheat and corn crops throve and vegetables and flowers made the gardens gay. Williamsburg was an even finer town now, than it had been when the pink-cheeked Molly Ball made her memorable visit there. In Hampton Roads and up and down the waters of the Potomac, the Rappahannock, the James, and the York, ships docked at intervals or packet-boats landed to deliver mail and light freight. Young Carters

and Pages and other F. F. V.'s continued to marry, and their fathers to build manor-houses for them, so that each year an ever increasing number of tall chimneys towered above the Virginia groves. On a bend of the James, young Thomas Randolph had settled himself at Tuckahoe, and the other Randolph brothers were finding brides and building homes. The Harrisons were at Brandon, the Byrds at Westover (with the fair Evelyn weaving her melancholy story under the big oaks), the Pages at Rosewell, the Nelsons and Taliaferros, Blands, Carys, and Moncures spread over a dozen counties. John Carter of Corotoman and his beautiful wife, Elizabeth Hill, lived at Shirley. Sabine Hall had just been built for Landon Carter and Stratford for Thomas Lee. Life must have seemed full of color to Mary Ball, about to become Mary Washington.

The two were married on the sixth of March, 1731. The probability is that the wedding took place in old Yeocomico. Then, as now, brides chose their own background, and for this one the church of her childhood and girlhood would inevitably have been the place.

Courtship and wedding customs in Virginia and New England differed greatly at that particular time. There was much more simplicity in the North, and less glamour. Before a Virginia wedding could be celebrated the banns were cried Sunday after Sunday; this in itself was a romantic gesture, the signal for teasings and blushings and retreats. Then there was all the excitement of tremendous preparation, the choosing of gifts, the watch-

ing of flowers, the sewing of the trousseau. Up in the colder land matters took a more prosaic course. Old Judge Sewall of Massachusetts, a famous "marrying judge," had a bleak time trying to win the hand of Widow Winthrop. He had already had three wives and so should have been more expert at the business than the result proved him to be. His diary is very frank. The last memorandum, made the night he got the mitten, has an undeniably spiteful touch: "Took leave of her. . . . Treated me courteously. . . . Told her she had entered her fourth year of widowhood. . . . Her dress was not so clean as sometime it had been. . . . Jehovah jireh. . . ."

His daughter Betty fled the bonds of marriage as earnestly as he sought them. When a discarded but undiscouraged suitor appeared yet again, she hid in the family coach until he left, and then emerged, as her father callously recorded in his diary, "looking wild." The judge finally badgered her into accepting the young man. Perhaps if Betty's courtship had known the accompaniment of mocking-birds and mellow moonlight she would have felt no impulse to take refuge in the coach.

Mocking-birds (if not nightingales) and moonlight were what Mary Ball had, and in due time the crying of her banns, and then, on an early spring day, a white-robed Church of England minister reading the service, and afterwards gay festivities at some house, probably Sandy Point. If the red dragon had just spared this one parish register, we should know who the attendants were,

and who signed in the vestry; and if someone had only kept a diary, and it had by some chance survived, we should know, most important of all, how the bride was dressed!

Pope's Creek was Mary's fifth home. She could not remember Epping Forest at all, but on the spring day of her marriage, childhood memories of Northumberland and recollections of girlhood years at Bonhum's Creek must have been very clear, for they were still very near. The Washington plantation comprised a thousand acres of woodland and river bottoms, that "slow, moist, fat mould" that the old historian noted with prideful satisfaction. The farm lay in the shape of a truncated triangle with the Potomac at its base, Pope's Creek on one side, and Bridge's Creek on the other. The house stood on a green slope facing the river. It was not an imposing dwelling like Stratford or Millenbeck, or the newly completed Sabine Hall, but it was comfortable and commodious, with four rooms on the first floor and a long porch. Two huge brick chimneys flanked the building, one at each end.

No doubt the new mistress of the house felt proud and pleased. Her husband was not a remarkably rich man as rich men went in those affluent days, but he was beyond doubt in comfortable circumstances. Moreover, Mary had her own property. She possessed two good-sized tracts in Stafford County, one left her by her father, the other the legacy of John Johnson; and there may have been still other land, too. Her personal property included

several horses and the young negro servant whose purchase money had been provided in her mother's will, or at any rate the children of that servant. Twenty years before that Joseph Ball, Senior, had written down for her, "My negro boy Tome and the negroes Jo and Jack." If "Tome" and the others had increased as rapidly as the rest of their race, the young woman must have brought with her to her new home a regular retinue of servants.

Perhaps, since she was fundamentally domestic, her dearest treasure was the store of household goods that came to her from her parents: china and pewter ware, kitchen utensils—best of all, that stuff so dear to a colonial woman's heart, her "bed furniture," curtains and fallens, quilts and blankets, every stitch of it precious in those days of large families and numerous guests,—and that chief of treasures, a feather "tick," for her father, as he neared eternity that June day at Epping Forest, had written also: "Item, I give to my daughter Mary all my feathers yt are in the kitchen loft to be put into a bed for her." The old trunk that Mary Hewes had named came along, no doubt, perhaps packed with the bed furniture, or it may have been with the trousseau. People put on no airs about luggage in those days. In the Fredericksburg cottage where Mary Ball lived her last years there is still an old trunk. If it is not the one her mother owned, it nevertheless has a long, good history, as every one of its brass tacks can testify.

The young matron's trunk no doubt contained a number of dresses that were not new. Mary Hewes had "given

and devised" her daughter a good deal of her own wearing apparel. Clothing was made of iron-strong material in those deliberate times, and fashions had a long lease on life, with the result that one dress might be, and often was, worn by three generations of women. Young Mrs. Washington may have donned, the day after her wedding, the self-same "second day" gown that her mother had donned as a bride. Though, as a matter of fact, Mary Hewes was a bride so often that this might be considered a somewhat rash speculation.

The new bride's hoop petticoat was probably larger than her mother's would have dared to be, for that was a fashion that had suffered a good deal of change. The followers of the fashion had suffered along with it, for the hoop skirt, with the passing of time, had merged by degrees from an absurdity into an abomination. Not long after Mary's girlhood, London architects were obliged to reckon with the garment in all their building plans; they actually had to devise curved stairways to meet the emergency. The most outrageous of the styles in hairdressing did not come until later on, so it is some comfort to reflect that anyway Mary Ball's golden hair was not "kneaded with pomatum and flour, drawn up over a pad of wool, twisted into knots, and decorated with ribbons and artificial flowers."

Whether the girl wore her mother's clothes or not, she followed her example in marrying a widower and going home with him to a ready-made family. The two Washington boys, Lawrence and Augustine, were good-

sized lads at that time, with Jane, their sister, midway between them. A little son named Butler had died before his mother; their two names were inscribed on the family vault at Bridge's Creek. The first wife's name was written also on the flyleaf of a book that Mary found in one of the rooms—*Jane Butler Washington,* done delicately in the graceful handwriting of that day. The book was Sir Matthew Hale's "Contemplations." Whether it offered new reading, or was merely reminiscent of Thomas Baker and other years, there is no way of knowing. But we do know that the first signature was followed by another, just below it, *Mary Washington;* and that the second signer read the well-thumbed pages diligently for the rest of her sojourn in this world.

CHAPTER VIII

THE house at Pope's Creek was built on the regulation plan of farmhouses of that day, with a long hall through the center and dormer windows in the sloping roof. In the case of the Washington house one of the downstairs rooms formed a single-story extension. The chimneys stood on the outside, mammoth shafts of brick serving immense fireplaces that were each large enough to take half a cord of wood at a time. Those great generous fires were the making of colonial homes in winter. Candle light, for all its beauty, was dim, the floors were bare, and the furniture was stiff and unyielding; but all other lacks were redeemed by the glory of the flaming hearths. They lighted the whole house and gave out a comfort that warmed to the core. Fithian notes with wonder in his diary that down at Nomini Hall twenty-eight open fires were kept burning all winter, one in each room of the immense establishment, and that a horde of young negroes were employed in bringing in wood from dawn till dark. With fuel plentiful—in solid oak, crisp beech, rich-hearted, resined pine—and little black boys swarm-

ing all over every plantation, fire was the cheapest luxury of the time.

Hearths were shining at Pope's Creek when the new bride came home. Winter had turned the curve into spring, but it was still early March, with a nip in the air. The rooms in the Washington dwelling were not strange to her, of course; nevertheless she must have examined with fresh interest the blue tiles that rimmed the parlor fireplace with graphic scenes from the Old Testament, Jonah and the whale especially prominent. Some of those tiles lasted long after the house was gone —long enough to be looked on with a reverence that would have astonished the tall young woman who felt for them that bridal day only the pride of new ownership. Yet in themselves they were handsome tiles. In this ribald era Jonah has fallen into disrepute, his name is more than ever held to be a synonym for disaster. But when Mary Washington walked into her front room that spring and gravely confronted the unfortunate adventurer above her hearth, she was not alarmed; in fact with that date a development had started for her that no adverse influence would ever be able to touch.

Augustine Washington was a tall, serious man, gray-eyed and fair-haired. Years after his death one of his grandsons heard him described by a former acquaintance. "Six feet in height he was," the old fellow said, "of noble appearance and manly proportions, with the most extraordinary muscular power. Over at the Principia Iron Works, where he acted as agent, he used to

lift up and place in a wagon a mass of iron that two ordinary men could hardly have raised from the ground." But for all his phenomenal strength, he seems to have been remembered mainly for his gentleness.

So, everything taken into consideration, Mary Ball's lines had fallen to her in a pleasant place. After much wandering for one so young, over seas and back, and up and down Eastern Virginia, she had come to rest at last in a fair home, set in green acres and looking out across a noble river, with servants and horses, a well-stocked house, and an excellent husband. It probably did George Eskridge's kind heart good to see his ward beginning her new life in such satisfactory circumstances. It could not enter into either his calculations or hers that she was settling down to make history for America; all they both knew was that her outlook promised peace and plenty.

No woman could take up life on a plantation, with a husband and three stepchildren, numerous servants, and a good-sized house to manage, and experience many idle hours. As a matter of fact, Mary Washington had known small chance for idleness in all her days so far. No doubt she picked up her new key basket with as much confidence as if she had been born with one in her hand. That revered institution—the key basket—had its origin in colonial Virginia. The large establishments required, of course, abundant food supplies, and those supplies must be kept safely stored away in cellars, meathouses, dairies, pantries, and various other places. The

colored slaves were genially light-fingered, so every door bore a lock; the result was that when the mistress of the house sallied forth to give out meals and apportion supplies she jingled like a medieval gate-keeper. The key basket was therefore the outcome of necessity, as familiar in every household as skillet or warming-pan. There was plenty to be locked up at Pope's Creek—soft, white, water-ground cornmeal, sugar-cured hams, dark preserves and dried fruit, vegetables, butter, and cheese, the rich products of the farm's "fat mould"; and the new Mrs. Washington, if she had done nothing else at all, would have had her hands full with looking after her food supply.

Those hands must have been almost disconcertingly full at first. Moreover, many duties besides those of the household needed attention. For any bride in the thickly settled aristocratic neighborhood of kinsfolk and life-long friends and companions, there were many new obligations added to the old. If this one fell in with the usual Virginia custom, her first spring and summer of married life were full of pleasurable visiting and entertaining—not to the extent of crowding out the key basket, but in plentiful measure.

One happening at the new home—it may have been in the first summer—was a tragic experience for the young woman and left an impression from which she never made the slightest recovery. While the family were at supper one day, lightning struck the house and, running down the chimney, killed a young girl who was visiting

the Washingtons. The bolt must have descended literally from the blue, one of those forerunners that come in certain sultry weather before the clouds have fully massed. For some inexplicable reason electricity played worse havoc in that region two hundred years ago than it does now. So terrific were the storms that, at the first onset, the more timid of the womenfolk used to hide themselves in feather beds. Fithian gives a vivid picture of Madam Carter's terror at Nomini Hall. She could not forget, probably, that at Berkeley on the James, a few years prior to that time, one stroke had killed Benjamin Harrison and his two daughters. In the tragedy at the Washington home, the victim was sitting directly beside Mrs. Washington, who felt the tremendous force of the shock and saw the girl's knife and fork melt and run together in her hands. Forever afterward, stout-hearted woman though she was, she hid her head and prayed whenever lightning flashed.

Just before the second spring came round, Mary Washington's first child was born. The boy opened his eyes under the high ceiling of the "best chamber" on a chilly morning that was then called the 11th of February, 1731. People altered so little in those slowly shifting times that in all probability at noon of that amazing morning Augustine Washington was every whit as calm as Joseph Ball had been on the day that Mary herself was born, and with less warrant. He may even have saddled his horse and ridden off, as the other did.

There were some similarities in the two occasions:

both babies came as the first child of a second marriage, and both arrived at a Northern Neck plantation home at a period when Eastern Virginia was prosperous and serene, without fear or prospect of impending change. Only, when the boy child came there was no glory of fall foliage, no partridge calls nor clicking chestnuts, but bare boughs under pale sunlight, and in the air that chill, indescribable bleakness that belongs to February alone. Huge fires were still flaming in the manor-houses up and down the Neck; one crackled loudly, no doubt, in the Pope's Creek parlor beneath Jonah and his whale, and another in the best chamber where an ordinary looking infant was being deftly pinned into his first clothes. Somewhere else on the place the child's two half-brothers and their sister were discussing curiously the new event. Mary Washington, come at length into her main destiny, lay quiet in a great four-poster, gazing up at the curtains and fallens under which she herself had been born, and musing more or less drowsily about her new son's name.

Before he was a month old she bundled him up, too full of pride to wait another day, and drove away to show him to her favorite cousins, the James Balls of Bewdley. Old Bewdley stood on, up to ten years ago, its dormer windows still gazing down on the front yard with a sort of reminiscent look, as though they could remember well having witnessed that first outing of a first president. Then the red dragon licked them up and they became only a memory themselves.

When the spring had worn along a little farther, there

was a new record ready for the family Bible: "George Washington, son of Augustine and Mary his wife, was born ye 11th Day of February 1731/32 about ten in the morning and was baptized the 5th of April following. Mr. Beverley Whiting and Capt. Christopher Burks Godfathers and Mrs. Mildred Gregory Godmother."

The baptism took place, perhaps, in Pope's Creek Church, with the full form and ritual of the Episcopal service. Mildred Gregory, the godmother, was Augustine Washington's only sister, and the name bestowed was that of George Eskridge, faithful friend and guardian. Those who make it a business to run down motives may like to speculate that possibly the baby was called after his king; there is something highly diverting in such a possibility, but the balances weigh far more heavily for Eskridge. Why that good guardian was not chosen as one of the two godfathers seems somewhat of a mystery; perhaps—save the mark!—he was a dissenter. It is said that another baby was baptized at the same time, by name Richard Henry Lee. No doubt the pair of them wailed lustily through the long service.

The clergyman who prayed the child George past "the waves of this troublesome world," as the stately wording runs, would have shaken a little under his white starched surplice could he have foreseen the size of those waves and the shore from which they were to make. But he was only priest, not prophet, so it was with all calmness that he signed the defenseless forehead with the sign of the cross and placed the new Episcopalian back in

his young mother's arms. And she, in her turn, equally ignorant of the strange future, bore him home to be brought up according to the teachings of Thomas Baker of revered memory.

In the two years that immediately succeeded two other children were born to Augustine and his wife. One was called Elizabeth, for Mary's best loved sister, the other Samuel for that sister's husband, the giver of the dapple-gray horse. The names of these first three children serve as three little straws to show which way the pleasant wind was blowing in the home—all for the young mother's side of the house, an indication that Augustine Washington was as generous as he was gentle. In the first part of 1735 the household was made slimmer by the death of little Jane, the only daughter of the first wife. She was about twelve years old. The record in the family Bible does not tell us how it was that she went so young—only, in staid and stilted wording, that she "departed this life."

That spring the Pope's Creek farmhouse, following the custom of all Virginia houses in good standing, burned to the ground. Tradition says that young Mrs. Washington herself was the unwitting cause of the calamity, burning brush, in an excess of housewifely zeal, too close to the porch. Everything was propitious for a first-class fire, with Mr. Washington absent, the wind blowing toward the building, no water available except that which could be brought hurriedly from a small spring several hundred yards distant, and no

neighbor near enough to lend a hand. Mrs. Washington and the negro servants, working valiantly, saved a little of the furniture, Sir Matthew Hale's "Contemplations," the two babies in arms and the future father of his country. Jonah and the whale slid down into the ashes, to be lost for many a dismal year. Everything else perished except the outside kitchen where, it is calmly recorded, the family ate supper that night. In spite of the stupendous loss, they must have felt that they came off well, for the recent catastrophe at Mt. Pleasant, Colonel Lee's home, was still fresh in their memories, when Mrs. Lee and one of the children were rescued only by being dropped from a window, and not even the kitchen was left.

Augustine Washington did not attempt to rebuild. Within a month or two he gathered up his family instead and moved to a place he had bought from his sister, Epsiwassen, many miles farther up the Neck in Prince William County. Today the county is called Fairfax, and long ago the quaint Indian name of the place was changed to Mount Vernon. The move from Westmoreland to the upper Potomac is bound, in the nature of things, to have been a colossal feat. The job of conveying household goods, servants, and small children for eighty-five miles over the crude highway of that day must have required all Augustine Washington's strength and all Mary Washington's amiability. They may have gone by water, but that is not probable; if so, their achievement was an even more prodigious one. If they

went by land, they drove in carriages for two days, up to the hubs in mud, and halting for an uncomfortable night somewhere along the route.

It is not likely that Washington owned a large family coach such as his wealthier neighbors used, but one may have been borrowed for the occasion. If this happened, then, though the little company traveled with pomp they traveled with painful slowness. Colonial chariots were not built for speed; colonial roads forbade that. What they lost in grace, however, they made up in dignity. Here is a description of a post chariot that was advertised in the Virginia *Gazette* a few years after the Washington journey, more elaborate, of course, than the average family vehicle, but not much less lordly than many in the Neck, notably that of King Carter.

To be sold for the first cost, An elegant new Post Chariot, and harness for four horses to drive with postillions, painted in the newest taste, French gray, the mouldings covered, roped, jagged, and gilt, lined with green morocco leather, a large trunk to fit behind, with an oil-cloth cover, in every respect quite complete for a family, and made (under the particular direction and inspection of a gentleman from London) in Piccadilly, by Richard Gray.

Several vehicles must have been required for the Washington outfit, and a number of good strong horses. The dapple-gray and the other young riding horses had by this time gone to their reward, but some of the "increase" of the good mare left by Mary Hewes may have helped in the long journey. It took stout horseflesh to

do what had to be done in that time and region. The ridge road up the Northern Neck was a mud hole in winter and a stretch of Sahara in summer. In either case the wheels went as though made of lead, and progress was heavy and painful.

As the Washingtons forged slowly on, leaving their old home and putting behind them also Stratford, where Robert E. Lee was to be born, and the future birthplaces of Madison and Monroe, they came abreast, far up the road, of the farm which was later on to be their home, a small house on the green north bank of the Rappahannock. Across the river from that point rose the clustered chimneys and slant roofs of Fredericksburg. Mary Washington's gaze of interest, as she looked across at the metropolis of the Northern Neck, would have been even more eager if she could have known how largely the town was to figure in her future life. The little boy beside her looked too, but with the bored stare of weary childhood, for by that time he had traveled forty miles. In future years the streets of Fredericksburg were to ring with his homecoming, but now he passed by humbly enough, and most probably in tears, on the farther side of the river.

Leaving the Rappahannock and bearing on and on to the north, the travelers left King George County and passed through upper Stafford, which had already given George Mason to the world. Then, moving still upward, they forded with splashings one after another of the innumerable creeks of the Potomac, which in that region

spreads into fingers like an outstretched hand, and, bearing still on and on toward the north, came at last to Epsiwassen.

The new home stood on the south bank of the Potomac, a plain house, simpler than the other, but sufficiently large to be comfortable. Over on the opposite bank, a few miles farther up, a great city was to be laid out in future time, and called in honor of the three-year-old child in the company. But on the day they reached their journey's end the boy probably showed small signs of greatness, being only fretful and forlorn after his eighty miles of jolting over the long, uncomfortable road.

In the months that followed his mother, too, would have been forlorn if she had been given to repining. The new home and the old were washed by the same river tide, but it was a far cry from Epsiwassen to Pope's Creek. She was now separated almost as by the width of the ocean from the genial neighborhood life of Westmoreland—from her favorite sister, from the devoted Eskridges and the Bewdley Balls, from all the other neighbors and first cousins and lesser kin among whom her former years had been spent. She must in a sense begin life all over again, as her mother had done thirty years before, and as, for that matter, she herself would have to do yet again and again. But there was a strong streak of her doughty old grandfather in Mary Ball Washington. He, too, had been hauled up short by destiny, shorn of his possessions, and exiled to a strange

land. He had met the issue squarely and made good; so would she.

Colonial women were not greatly given to having vapors and going into declines. Those manifestations were fashionable in their day, and highly genteel, but for pioneers in a rough new land they were not practicable, even for the lady of the richest manor, and that was all. As for Mrs. Augustine Washington, if she owned a bottle of smelling salts she certainly never got a chance to use it. Settling down in a new home as wife, mother, stepmother, and housekeeper and carrying through successfully all that pertained to these offices provided abundant occupation; the emotions must wait.

The Washingtons' nearest neighbors in Prince William County were to be the Fairfaxes of Belvoir, and the acquaintance between the two families was destined to have more than one intimate development. Augustine Washington's oldest son, Lawrence, who had just been sent to England for his education was to return and fall in love with William Fairfax's Anne. And Lord Fairfax, cousin of William Fairfax of Belvoir, was to take a mighty interest, as years passed, in the child George. So the threads went weaving and weaving on in the pattern of Mary Washington's life.

In Prince William two more little boys were born to the Washingtons, and later a second girl. One boy was John Augustine, called for the founder of the family in America and for his own father, in spite of the fact that Jane Butler's son also bore the name Augustine. The

other was Charles, named for nobody knows whom, perhaps in a sort of flare-back to Stuart loyalty. The little girl was given the name of her father's well-loved sister Mildred.

There has come down for us only one direct contact with the family life at Episwassen during the four years' stay there. This is a long advertisement in the lone Virginia newspaper of the day, the *Gazette* of Williamsburg, which served as business medium, social register, and organ of opinion for all Eastern Virginia. The notice ran in three issues of the publication. Though it has no special significance, it is full of interest as being the actual words of the elder Washington. The announcement deals with the disappearance of four indentured servants from a Westmoreland plantation, one of them, a bricklayer, the property of Augustine Washington. The bricklayer, it would appear, had been bound out—sublet, as it were—to another Northern Neck planter, Captain Daniel McCarty, a son-in-law of Major Ball of Bewdley. For some reason best known to himself, and doubtless entirely adequate, he had broken his articles and gone gayly off with three other malcontents. His master, too far away to give the matter personal attention, appealed to the public in a long, meticulously worded announcement.

Ran away from Capt. McCarty's Plantation on Pope's Creek in Westmoreland County a servant-man belonging to me, the subscriber, in Prince William County. His Christian name is John, but sirname forgot; is pretty tall, a bricklayer by trade,

and is a Kentishman. He came to Potowmack, in the Forward, Capt. Major, last year; is supposed to have the figure of our Saviour marked with gunpowder on one of his arms. He went away about the 20th of April last in company with three other servants, viz: Robert Martin, is a middle sized man, fresh colored, about 22 years of age, and is a sailor; had on a blew jacket. Richard Kibble is a middle sized young fellow, has several marks made by gunpowder on his arms, but particularly one on his breast, being the figures of a woman and a cherry tree, and is a carpenter by trade; he wore a blew coat with a large cape, a snuff-colored cloth waistcoat, and buckskin breeches. Edward Ormsby is a small, thin fellow of swarthy complexion, and is a taylor by trade; has a hesitation or stammering in his speech, and, being an Irishman, has a good deal of a brogue. They went away from Capt. Aylett's landing, on Potowmack, in a small boat, and are supposed to be gone towards the Eastern Shore or North Carolina. Whoever will secure the said bricklayer so he may be had again, shall have five pounds reward, besides what the law allows, paid.

Augustine Washington.

Whatever talents Augustine Washington may have lacked, the power of expressing himself could not have been one of them. The four fugitives that he here describes start into life before our very eyes: the tall Kentishman with a mystical figure pricked out on his forearm; the middle-sized sailor in his "blew" jacket; Kibble, the snuff-colored carpenter, tattooed with a cherry-tree (he, surely, should have been Washington property); and the thin, swarthy Irish tailor with a stuttering brogue. A reader of the *Gazette* should have recognized the quartet on sight. Whether anyone did or not

there is no way of knowing. The notice carried in its first appearance an additional line: "It is not doubted but the owners of the other servants will give the same reward for each of theirs." Since this postscript was lacking afterward, it looks as if the masters of Kibble, Ormsby, and Martin refused to subscribe to the offer, or else that those three of the group were recaptured without Washington's Kentishman.

The bricklayer was to be needed before long, for the very next year the dwelling at Epsiwassen fulfilled its destiny as a colonial house, and burned to the ground. This calamity did not mean destitution. Augustine Washington owned a place in King George—later, Stafford—on the Rappahannock, a farm and a plain homestead very much like the one that had just burned. He made the necessary repairs, got the house in readiness, and then the family packed up such of their furniture as had not been destroyed in the two conflagrations, and stowed themselves away afresh in cumbersome carriages with the additional babies. Mary Ball Washington, who had pitched her tent at Epping Forest, in Northumberland, in Wokingham, at Bonhum's Creek, at Pope's Creek, at Epsiwassen, now folded it again for still another move.

CHAPTER IX

THE new encampment was to prove by far the longest of all. The place, stretching along a steep bank of the Rappahannock, was sometimes called Pine Grove, for a group of tall dark pines that distinguished it, and sometimes Ferry Farm, because of the ferry that plied between the foot of the bluff and the town beyond. The latter name, having the more active and practical connotation, was the one commonly used. The house sat snug and high, shielded from the north winds by a stand of tall hills, and looking across to Fredericksburg and southwestward to the blue rolling land of Caroline county.

For the next few years Augustine Washington's wife lived as quietly as it is possible for the mother of several small children to live, and as busily as she must. Household help was plentiful of course; every gentleman farmer of those days owned numerous servants. Even at that, though, the mother of the family must have had almost more to do than she could manage. The head of the place and his negro laborers attended to crops, gardens, and livestock; but inside the house there were

cooking and cleaning to be superintended, weaving and sewing, preserving, churning, the curing of meat, the preparing and drying of vegetables, the care of numerous children. Three women of average ability might have had the oversight of the one household and have failed to find a single idle moment in a whole working day.

It was not too much, however, for Mary Washington. Trained straight along for that sort of thing, she had taken to the training like a duck to water. The only new feature was the task of being a mother, and that came even more naturally—to her—than spinning or weaving or putting up preserves. She was not the type of woman who is merely made a mother, nor yet the type that achieves motherhood with difficulty. There are some like that. She belonged definitely to the larger class that are born mothers. It had been necessary for Mary Hewes and Elizabeth Bonhum to instruct her in the household arts, but nobody had to teach her the art of handling babies. When the little Washingtons came crowding as thick as huckleberries, she was ready for them. With all her being she threw herself into the work of seeing them into the world and after that—sometimes long after, and even then by the hardest efforts—keeping them there.

Ferry Farm offered a good background for the stupendous job. Its fine soil yielded plentiful support for a growing family, and its high situation, on a ridge above the river, made for health and comfort. The edge of the front yard dropped away in a sheer bluff that might well have dismayed any mother in her timider

moments, but at least there was dry ground at the bottom of the bluff, for a hundred feet of "flats" lay between the bank and the river proper. Besides, there were many outcropping bushes and trees that by the mercy of Providence might be depended upon to stop a small hurtling Washington on his way down. The farmhouse itself repeated the Pope's Creek and Epsiwassen houses point by point on a somewhat smaller scale—hip-roofed upper story, staring dormer windows, and tall, sturdy chimneys, one at each end of the building.

The Rappahannock, moving steadily beyond the flats on its long journey from the Blue Ridge mountains to the bay, ran deep and silent by Ferry Farm. The merchant boats that went up on their way to Falmouth port breasted a hard current here. As they forged by, the tips of their masts almost seemed, from the farmhouse windows, to scrape the edge of the front yard. Fredericksburg, over beyond the water, was still a small, scattered town, but yearly growing in grace and importance. The westering sun every day picked out chimneys, roofs, and spires, until the place stood forth, to the eyes of Ferry Farm, like a toy village in some old story.

In coming to the new county Mary Washington had to some extent come home. Here she was far closer to her friends and relations than she had been up in Prince William. Westmoreland was only thirty miles distant; Northumberland and Lancaster, while farther than that, were nevertheless accessible. Moreover, many of her people from the lower counties had found their way

up the river. Her sister-in-law, Mildred Gregory, was by this time married to Henry Willis, "top man of Fredericksburg," and settled in the town with the three daughters of her former marriage. Hannah Ball Travers, the half sister that Mary loved next to Elizabeth Bonhum, lived in Stafford, the adjoining county, and many other families of kinsfolk and acquaintance were within a few miles of the new home. It must have been a happy day for Mrs. Washington when, after the wearisome drive down the Potomac creeks, she unpacked her numerous babies and other belongings in the house on the river bluff.

As the days went by, each with its complement of homely experiences, the river farm became a part of the very fabric of this woman's life. Some places do that with some lives, especially country places. The different features of the simple surroundings take on special associations—the angle of a field, the slope of a meadow, the view from an upstairs window at sunset or dawn, the way the moon comes up over the edge of a certain hill. Each room, each tree, each frowsy bush develops, in the passing of the long years, a sort of poignant individuality. This happened for George Washington's mother. The homes of her childhood and her early womanhood lapsed away into little more than pleasant dreams. It was Ferry Farm, the place where she was longest and most intently engaged in bringing up her five children, that slowly became her spirit's real home.

In the front yard, looking out across the river, there still stands a huge linden tree that was probably standing on the day that the carriage from the Potomac drove up to the door and emptied itself of its weary freight. And at the foot of a southward slope bubbles an ancient spring that little exploring boys found on that selfsame day. The water of that small crystal spring had a memorable taste all its own. Long after Mary Washington was an old woman, and gone away for good, she still thirsted for a drink of it, as David thirsted for the well near Bethlehem.

She had still another tie with the place. Before the family had been there long, Mildred, the second daughter and youngest child, who had been born there, was taken from them. She was very small, scarcely more than a baby, but her going put a fresh seal on the bond with Ferry Farm. Augustine Washington had already lost two children, but for the mother it was a new experience, and it gave the place a different and bittersweet significance, as sorrows have a way of doing with homes.

In spite of this grief, the first years on the Rappahannock made very nearly the high point, in happiness, of Mary Washington's life. Her hands may have been over-full, but so was her heart, and it was a pleasant fulness. The five children left to her were a happy, healthy lot; there was no wealth, yet neither was there any shadow of want; and the long road from the lower Northern Neck kept her in constant touch, as did the ferry, with cousins and friends.

Augustine Washington knew how to take care of his family. With a talent for farming and a good head for business, he was a home-lover, too, and highly prized in his community. The Fredericksburg people made him one of their Feoffees, or trustees, and he held also the position of head of the Principia Iron Works, located above the town. In his house by the upper highway he kept the latchstring out and an extra log for the fire as he had done in Westmoreland. When John Fothergill, English physican and Quaker preacher, had come up from Warwick County into the Northern Neck, a few years earlier, he wrote Pope's Creek into his diary. "Received at Justice Washington's," he noted, a "friendly man." If the good Quaker had pushed up the Neck a little later on he would have found the same hospitality waiting at the other home.

But for the elder Washington the stay at Ferry Farm was to be very brief. In the eighteenth century long life was the exception rather than the rule; even the halest and heartiest person was likely to go at a little past middle age. Augustine Washington was less than fifty when, in the third spring after his settling in King George, he was stricken with a kind of rheumatic fever which carried him off in a few weeks. They took his body back to Westmoreland and left it in the family burying place at Bridge's Creek on the north edge of the farm.

Mary Ball had made no mistake in her choice of a husband. He was years her senior, to be sure, and serious and perhaps unimaginative; but it has been said of him

that his life was gentle and that he was well-beloved by his fellowmen, and that is much to say of a man. She might have gone farther than the distance between Bonhum's Creek and Pope's Creek for a mate and fared worse. Distinctively gentle he was, and trustworthy, and of special courtesy. His great physical strength was never used in combat, men remembered, except when needed for the defence of the weak. In the last hours, when his mind went roving over the past, he said to someone who stood by: "I thank God that in all my life I never struck a man in anger . . . I should have killed my antagonist, and then his blood, at this awful moment, would have lain heavily on my soul. . . . I die at peace with all mankind."

His widow was left with a large family at the age when many a woman is just beginning her married life. Henceforth she must fight all her battles single-handed. That would be for her a totally new experience. Born so much younger than all the rest of her generation, she had been shielded from responsibility to a remarkable degree. Her father, her brother, her stepfather, Samuel Bonhum, Captain Eskridge and Augustine Washington had all, one after the other, watched out for her welfare; her mother and sisters and cousins, all disproportionately older than herself, had given her loving oversight. Now at length she was practically alone with the management of her own life and of five young lives besides.

But she was a woman of strong mind and dauntless

nature, and she did not wince. It was no small crisis that she had to face. When in other days people called her awe-inspiring and a little hard, as people did, they failed to take into consideration the sudden and big readjustment that may have helped to create that apparent sternness. It has been said too that she was a strict disciplinarian, and that she had a mania for method. Perhaps that is true. The times sanctioned strict discipline, and she was without the benefit of modern psychology in dealing with her four wilful little fatherless boys. As to method, responsibility breeds system. We must put these facts in the favorable side of the scale along with the fact that she is also said to have had, the older she grew, a sweetly cadenced voice. Shakespeare would give her the decision on that alone.

Poverty, at any rate, was not to be one of her difficulties. Washington had used well the ten talents of his substantial inheritance, and there was no reason why his family should suffer at all. After providing for his two eldest sons, Lawrence and Augustine, he had left the remainder of the estate in trust for the other children, with their mother in charge of its administration until they should come of age. That is, she was to be in charge of the property provided she did not re-marry. This final provision is, of course, nobody's business but Augustine Washington's. Still, for all his gentle memory, it irritates a little. Did Jane Butler, making over her property when she came to die, down at Pope's Creek, make any mention of second marriage? But perhaps in those days (it

is too unimportant a detail to look up) a woman's husband automatically administered her property; one thing is certain, he nearly always automatically—and promptly —married again.

Probably in this particular wife's case the proviso was not needed at all. She must have been slightly weary of the idea of second marriage. Her mother, her father, and her husband had taken, among themselves, seven mates; she was doubtless perfectly willing, without being enjoined, to break the family record. It is even more probable that, facing life with five children and the care of their combined heritages and of the home farm on her hands, she scarcely meditated at all over Augustine's stipulation.

If the newly made widow could have known it, she was destined to face far more than the tasks of raising children and administering property. The course of her life had just taken a sharp curve, it is true, but not sufficiently sharp to show much of what lay beyond. For all around her, unrealized but long active forces were working for a far greater change than she or any one else could even have suspected. Two wars were brewing for America; one was soon to begin, the other would be a long time in the making. Eastern Virginia, to be sure, was more pleasant and peaceful than it had ever been. Indian outrages were by now nothing more than tales left over from the far past. Up and down the peninsula river vessels came and went, touching at the more important points to discharge merchandise and take on tobacco; up

and down the long roads carriages traveled with increasing ease. Crops flourished; the fields were full of singing negroes, not yet slavery-conscious. There were balls and tournaments, fox-hunts and dinners, long Sunday services at the great brick churches, occasional trips down to the capital on social, political, and business errands. And so far as the average Virginian could see, life would go on indefinitely that way.

But the rest of the world was not so quiet. Europe, as always, seethed with strife. France and Austria still struggled for world control, and England still held herself ready to maintain the balance of power by preventing either of them from getting too strong, while at the same time with her free hand she kept down Spanish ambitions at sea. Turkey harassed Austria in the rear, and Russia loomed as a growing menace under the rule of fantastic women and frantic men. Though Prussia seemed harmless as yet, Frederick the Great was about to ascend the throne and give the little nation an unrivalled place in the sun of eighteenth century history.

In every direction went on without ceasing the ageless activity of using religious prejudice for political ends, with Catholics and Protestants skilfully juggled against each other by unscrupulous schemers and every sect a separate counter in the intricate game. And while Central Europe contended and local factions wrangled, Britain went stolidly ahead with her long plan of making herself economic mistress of the world.

Over in the Western Hemisphere, though no one

seemed to realize it fully, least of all America, trouble of another kind was lowering. All along the outer edge of English settlement the French had been closing in gradually for half a century; a fort here and a fort there as the decades passed, an understanding with this powerful tribe, a strong treaty with that—till at length the whole frontier bristled with menace. The line of English settlement that had pushed so hardily westward began to curve back. Eastern colonials were gay and peaceful among their rose gardens and tobacco fields, but the west-line pioneers could not even barter for peace, and as for gayety, they had forgotten what the word might mean. The pot was bound to boil over before long.

Meanwhile Mary Ball Washington, destined to be painfully scalded in the boiling over, but undisturbed by matters well outside her province, went gravely on with her important and immediate business. Remaining obediently single, she kept the successful oversight of her children's scattered holdings, occasionally asking the help of a Fredericksburg lawyer or taking counsel with her stepson Lawrence. Ferry Farm and other land had been willed to her eldest son, the three younger boys received about seven hundred acres apiece, and the little girl's heritage was for the most part in money, well invested. To the mother fell the business management of all this property and also the oversight of crops, servants, and livestock on the place as well as the daily and hourly task of child-rearing and homemaking. By even the most critical it can hardly be imputed to her for

carelessness that she did not puzzle greatly over Austria and France, or wonder why England stood watchful, or what under the sun was the matter at the western border. Rumors must have reached her through visitors' talk or rare letters; but the general talk is much more likely to have been about a wedding in the Neck or, even as when she was born, about crops and weather, and letter-writing was too arduous a matter to allow of expending much strength on politics. So she had scant opportunity for keeping abreast of the times.

Besides everything else, there was the matter of the children's education to be wrestled with. Her own education had been all too meagre. The tutor and the governess who had wrought with her seem to have cared little—perhaps they knew even less—about anything beyond the three R's, and precious little of those. Certainly no one ever taught her how to write letters, or even how to spell those she did manage to write. Her general knowledge was very scant. She must have gathered a small amount of contemporary history in the echoes that floated from across the sea, and she may have heard of the amusing contention that the earth revolves around the sun, of Sir Isaac Newton's notion about gravitation, and a few other radical theories of that kind, though there is scarcely any chance that she did not go to her grave considering them all—the Newton idea included—stark foolishness. But whatever her teachers had drilled into her fair head, and whatever between housekeeping duties and horseback rides she had picked

up for herself, the sum total was not large. And now she was brought up short against the question of how to get the troublesome three R's into five other flaxen heads.

Though more attention was being paid, by this time, to the matter of education, opportunities and resources were still meagre in the colonies. People continued to regard knowledge as a gift rather than an attainment. There was no long road to learning; in their early teens children received a sprinkling of instruction—after that, though a few boys were sent to English universities, for the most part young people and their parents let the matter drop. There seems to have been no thought at any time of giving any of the younger Washingtons the English education that their father and their eldest brother had enjoyed. And the advantages for their primary schooling were of the slenderest. Public schools were as yet unknown; tutors were still the favorite medium for instruction.

When the family first moved to the Rappahannock farm, George rode horseback daily to the home of one Master Hobbie, the sexton of Overwharton parish, who followed teaching as a kind of by-trade. After the death of his father he attended school at Pope's Creek, which had risen from the ashes with the name of Wakefield. His teacher was a man named Williams, and among his fellow students were Robert and Henry Washington, his cousins, William Fitzhugh of Chatham, and Richard Henry Lee. There in study hours George and young Lee

looked at each other across the tops of their futile spelling books as they had looked across the rim of the baptismal font, in the same fine ignorance of what fate had in store for them; and at recess they romped and skinned the cat with all the independence, no doubt, that they judged they should ever need.

Up at Ferry Farm Samuel and John Augustine and Betty and small Charles were going to school in Fredericksburg to a gentle Huguenot parson named James Marye. When George returned from Westmoreland after two years he joined them. Every morning the five scrambled to the foot of the bluff, were ferried across the Rappahannock, and after scampering up a steep hill on the other side, walked a mile to their school. Destiny was hard at their capering heels—hardest, by far, at one pair, though the entire company was to know life in strange and strenuous times. All four of the boys became soldiers; Samuel had five wives in due—or undue—season; Charles went far away to live, or far as distance was counted then; and Betty brought ten children into the world before she was forty, some of them warriors. The collective future of the five was chockful; but they were thinking most, just then, of the glorious scow ride across the river and the long walk through busy streets, past shop windows—for Fredericksburg must have boasted at that time all of seven hundred souls.

In 1608, about a century before their mother was born, Captain John Smith, pushing his venturesome prow up the Rappahannock, had landed at the spot on which the

town later was built. There he proceeded in his usual genial and canny fashion to make friends with the Indian tribes who sat basking in the sun with no suspicion at all of what was about to happen to them. The pale-face stranger, striding in among them with his odd gibberish and fascinating gewgaws, offered a welcome diversion.

The white village that was started soon afterward grew very slowly. On the day that the Washington carriage passed along the other side of the river on its way to Prince William, Fredericksburg had been a chartered town for only a little while. Even as late as the middle of that century it was still an unpretentious place, far less important than its two neighbors across the water, Falmouth, a bustling little port, and Dumfries, still farther to the north.

From her slant windows at the farm Mary Washington could see only a few chimneys above the treetops. She is not likely to have had much communication with the town during her first years on the Rappahannock. The children considered their daily trip a lark, no doubt, but their mother, feeding and dressing them, shooing them off after breakfast in a compact group and counting their heads hastily in the late afternoon, found her share in the daily performance quite sufficient to satisfy her. Perhaps her chief contact with the outside world was on those occasions when travelers from farther down the Neck stopped by, as Virginians say, for greeting, or when Mildred Willis and her Gregory daughters or Hannah Travers came to call. Often, on Sundays, the

family carriage, with little heads sticking out from every corner, drove to Acquia, the parish church ten miles up the county, to morning service.

Young Lawrence Washington, Augustine's eldest son, stood now as the head of the family. He was a gallant fellow, a young man of parts, as the phrase ran then. Educated in England, a veteran of that country's South American wars, and a large landowner, he occupied in Virginia's eye a place of no small importance. His heritage had been a handsome one, as befitted the firstborn son of a father still imbued with English ideas of property ownership. The estate of Hunting Creek in upper Prince William had fallen to his share, with all its fertile lands and valuable fisheries, as well as other land and a heavy interest in the iron works near Fredericksburg. In the summer following his father's death he married Anne Fairfax, whose father's place adjoined Hunting Creek. Bringing his bride home, he changed the name of Hunting Creek to Mount Vernon, in honor of the admiral under whom he had fought at Carthagena. The good admiral and Lawrence both went to their graves little dreaming of how that name would live. This alliance of Washington and Fairfax blood was in time to affect strongly the family down on the lower river.

Lawrence kept in constant touch with his father's wife and children; his stepmother turned to him frequently for help in her affairs. The young man was especially devoted to her eldest son, and over and over again the boy journeyed up across the Potomac creeks to pay long

visits at Mount Vernon. His mother let him go without objection; she trusted Lawrence Washington. It may be that the bond between the two reminded her of that earlier tie between herself and Elizabeth Bonhum. When the invitation would come bidding George to Mount Vernon for a visit, she must more than once have remembered her own eagerness when, a fatherless child like her boy, she begged her mother's consent to the same kind of request from the Bonhums. It may be, also, that she saw in the growing lad a restlessness and love of change that she was reluctant to thwart.

The persistent legend that Mary Washington was forbidding in personality had its origin largely in the reactions of another Lawrence Washington—Lawrence of Choptank—who used to pay long visits at the home in King George county. This youngster, a comrade of the oldest Washington boy's, was frankly afraid of his playmate's mother. "She awed me in the midst of her kindness," he wrote in his old age. "Even now . . . I could not behold that majestic woman without feelings it is impossible to describe." There must have been some ground for this awe; it may be that on one or two occasions when spirits grew too obstreperous at the edge of the Rappahannock, birchings were administered without discrimination, the guest from Choptank receiving his peach cordial along with George and Samuel and John Augustine. But even granting that hypothesis, there are two things to be noted with regard to this con-

fession: one is, that the memory of her kindness persisted, the other, that the visits continued.

The relations between Mrs. Washington and her two stepsons go far toward testifying to the innate gentleness of her character. She had gone to Pope's Creek to become their nominal mother at a time in the lives of all three when new personal relations are hard to establish. She was little more than a girl, and a somewhat spoiled girl at that, and the two boys were just passing into the age of unruly roughness. But she held them through their early youth, and afterward; and that means much. If there came a time when the love between herself and Lawrence was severely strained, it must be remembered that the test was a cruel one; and after all, there was no actual rupture.

One of our few intimate glimpses of Ferry Farm is furnished by an old advertisement which touches both Lawrence and herself. It appears that the master of Mount Vernon had sent one of his own horses to the lower farm for the family's use. In the issue of the Virginia *Gazette* for May 9, 1745, the following notice may be found; we wonder, in passing, why the advertiser called her county Stafford, but that does not affect the picture.

Stray'd or Stol'n away from the Subscriber, living in St. Paul's parish, Stafford county, on the 30th of April last, in the night, a large black horse, branded on the far Shoulder L.W.; has a white spot on each Flank, and likewise on each side of

his Breast, with a long mane, most part of which hangs on his right side. Whoever brings the said horse to the Subscriber, at the Place aforesaid, shall have Half a Pistole Reward; if taken up forty miles from Home, a Pistole Reward, paid by

Mary Washington

The loan of this horse indicates that Lawrence had strong confidence in his stepmother. For it was only the summer before that another horse, the sorrel colt of historic memory, had been ridden to death by a youthful Washington on that very farm. To be sure the culprit, one George, was at school in Westmoreland that April when the *Gazette* advertisement appeared, but he was always returning for holidays, and with his homecoming the black horse would be in jeopardy, as its owner must have known. Nevertheless the transfer was made. Whether Lawrence was not largely influenced by his weakness for his young stepbrother is open to debate, of course. At any rate, he put the valuable animal in Mrs. Washington's care, and his trust was not misplaced, for when the black began to hanker after Potomac pastures and one day kicked up his handsome heels and was off, she took prompt steps for his recovery. There is something about this old notice which brings Mary Washington as close to us as if we were looking across the top of her garden fence—anxious, somewhat firm of jaw, attending keenly to the matter in hand.

The *Gazette* must have edited the spelling of the composition, but doubtless the vivid, efficient wording is her own. Augustine Washington did no better piece of work

with his picturesque description of the missing indentured servants. The advertisement appeared in three successive issues. Whether the black horse was ever caught it is not for us to know; but after two hundred years, thanks to his guardian and advertiser, we can still see him racing the old Alexandria road, his windy mane blown mostly to the right, his breast-mark shining, and a dollar-and-a-half reward upon his frisky head.

CHAPTER X

It is perhaps too much to ask of hero worshippers that they peer back of the hero and consider the principal factor that shaped him for glory—that is, whoever it was that had charge of his grubby little boyhood. Mary Washington raised four soldiers for the Revolutionary army, including its commander-in-chief. She did her raising single-handed, too, on an isolated farm at the steep edge of a river, and in a period when methods of communication were at best primitive and when there was little outside aid to be had in even the worst emergency. Doctors were as scarce as hens' teeth, and frequently just as futile; most of the remedies in common use were brewed in home kitchens from weeds and roots. The only dentists were blacksmiths; when a tooth had to come out it was removed in the smithy, with the patient's head held down on a table and a great display of brawn. Apothecary shops were few and far between, and the merchandise that went over their counters was of strange prescription. For the most part the business of doctoring was done at home.

The mother of the young Washingtons must have had

strong nerves or she would have aged early under sheer anxiety. Every day and twice a day her frisky brood was exposed to the perils of the deep, for the river ran hard and swift, and the ferryman could scarcely be expected to keep his eye on every passenger at once. On high days and holidays they romped along the edge of the steep cliff or, worse still, rode the farm horses at high speed, for riding was too strong in their blood to be eradicated. Besides all that there were endless visitations of mumps and measles, chickenpox and croup; warts had to be disposed of and poison ivy dealt with; nosebleeds must be staunched and venturesome collarbones yanked back into place. It is safe to say that not all the cooking and sewing and farm management of an entire year signified as much hard work as the job of keeping those five children alive for a month. Their mother did it, though, and for many months and years, and, so far as the world can know, with never a murmur. It was not merely a part of her life's routine; it was her life itself.

Moreover, she was not easily defeated. Hard work and heavy responsibility were to her a part of the scheme of existence. She may have been of cavalier stock, but even more was she of pioneer stuff. And the people who had crossed strange seas to build up a strange new country brought to the task, whether they landed in velvet or in homespun, a kind of spiritual hardihood that lasted for generations. The lonely woman on the Rappahannock accepted danger and difficulty as matters of course. Nor would she have worked one whit the harder or com-

plained one word the less if she had known that she was patching the trousers of incipient heroes. She simply set her jaw—the jaw that biographers have called hard—and went on with her job, undiscouraged by the fact that that job called for the combined genius of doctor, trained nurse, tailor, chef, and half a dozen other experts. Years afterward, when the first President spoke of owing all to his mother, he probably was not thinking of patches and poultices; nevertheless, in a far sense, they were all an integral part of his glory.

Back in the 1740's and 50's, flesh was heir to the same ills as today, only the ills had other names and were treated in other ways. Diaries of the time are full of references to curious afflictions—"violence", "Poyson", "megrum", "a fret of the head", "Lethargy", (with a capital L), and innumerable others. Chills and fevers were rife along the rivers. "Pussy Carter took an ague last night," one journal-writer notes casually, "but she had an easy fit." Landon Carter speaks irascibly of these "pestilential Pleurisies." King's Evil was more dreaded than ever now that Queen Anne of the magic touch had gone the way of all the Stuarts. Smallpox was still a plague; half a century was to elapse before vaccination was first used. Mary Washington had no doubt shared in the general excitement over the matter of Papan, a negro slave in Virginia who raised great expectations when he declared that he had a secret cure for smallpox, and was promised his freedom if he could make good the boast. A committee investigated him and

his claim and were fully convinced of his reliability. Smallpox went on, mysteriously enough, and what became of Papan and his freedom is not recorded.

The public attitude toward the cause and cure of diseases was strangely compounded of plain common sense and the rankest superstition, with now and then a throwback to the primitive in both theory and practise. That so hardheaded a person as Mrs. Washington could have credited the more fantastic of these ideas we can scarcely believe; and yet perhaps she did. They were an ancient and direct inheritance from her English grandparents, some of them tinctured for her, perhaps, with the outlandish voodooism of African slaves. It was earnestly and universally believed that a horsechestnut carried in the pocket was a sure talisman against rheumatism; that quinsy could be cured by a drink made of mouse ear steeped in ale and by rubbing with a stone that a hog had rubbed against. Pain in the breast was soothed by the skin of a wild-cat laid on "ye place grieved." Palsy could be effectively treated with lavender, but the strong smell of a wild fox would do just as well. Salt pork made a splendid plaster for any afflicted part; nightmares could be prevented by turning the shoes of the dreamer soles up under his bed.

The medicines, most fittingly called simples, were made from material close at hand, the herbs and roots of field and wood—catnip and pennyroyal, St. John's wort, spurge, hazel, poppy seed, and a myriad more. Every household had its mortar and pestle for pounding

out the potent juices; every housewife was her own apothecary. Two of the sovereign specifics were Seneca snakeroot, a remedy for almost everything, and a concoction called the Bark, a peculiarly powerful preparation of quinine. The old prescriptions read like poems: For headache, rosemary and sage infused in wine; for baldness, oil of radishes mixed with southernwood; for "frenzy", lettuce and violet leaves brewed in posset ale; for bringing back the color after sickness, a lotion of white wheat and rose water.

Well, mouse ear and powdered mole we can dismiss, and the other animal aids; but as to the rest, who knows? Since man is made of dust, it may be that the most potent cures for his ills do draw, after all, straight out of his native element. There was a favorite tonic called "Nine" because its ingredients fell into groups of three: Wintergreen, sassafras, and sarsaparilla; ginseng, ginger, and spikenard; hemlock, black birch, and pine. Every April the mother of the five Washingtons administered it with a firm hand; it had been tested out on herself many an April down by the Yeocomico. However futile it may have been for the Washington youngsters to race around with smelly little assafoetida bags at their necks, or turn their shoes upside down at night, nobody knows positively how much the Republic may or may not owe to that fine old tonic, pungent and bitter-sweet, drawn straight from the primeval sod year after year and mixed resolutely with young ambitious blood.

Life at Ferry Farm must have been almost primitive

in its simplicity. Augustine Washington left his family an immense amount of land but not a great deal of ready money. And for that matter, money could have done very little to make life easier for the widow and her children. Most of the luxuries known to modern life were unobtainable in those days, not because they were expensive but for the simpler reason that they had not come into existence. Mary Washington did not have even the ordinary conveniences of modern life. The water supply was brought on the negroes' flat heads from a hillside spring or caught in hogsheads as it fell from heaven, with the result that baths were at a premium. There were no lamps, only the faint shining candles, and no matches. Lights and fire were kindled by the difficult method of flint struck on steel, and the few coals left in the fireplace at night had to be carefully banked for future use, as precious as red gold. Little coats and dresses were sewed by hand—Mary Washington's ready, unwearying hand—for no such thing as a sewing-machine had even been imagined. The furniture was severely plain—heavy, back-breaking kitchen utensils of iron, cumbersome tables and chairs, trundle-beds for the children, a horse-hair sofa, perhaps, in the best room, pewter dishes and rough crockery for the table. Even long afterward, when she had a town house and the accumulation of years for furnishing it, Mrs. Washington found but little to leave in her will, and that of the simplest, not much more than her own mother had left to her, much of it, indeed, the selfsame stuff.

At the farm there was plenty of wholesome food for the growing boys. Luxuries might be lacking, but the fertile Rappahannock river land gave a yield that made a full larder. Fruit, berries, garden vegetables, Indian corn ground at the nearest mill, bacon raised and cured on the place,—all those things the family had in abundance. No eye had ever beheld granulated sugar, but a kind of heavy molasses easily served in its place. Whether or not the eldest son of the household ever had an adventure with a cherry tree, it is certain that he ate many a slice of cherry pie sweetened with sorghum. His mother doubtless knew all the wise little dodges and expedients of the housewife with limited resources and half a dozen hearty appetites to satisfy. The size and height of her offspring provide good evidence that the youngsters were not underfed.

The few household staples that must be had were procurable across the river at the town market place where merchandise from abroad was handled when the sailing packets touched at the pier. In the *Gazette,* that trusted medium for the transaction of every kind of business under the Virginia sun, appeared from time to time long lists of stock newly arrived and awaiting the inspection of housewives and fine ladies. One consignment included along with such attractive delicacies as Orange Flower, Virgin's Wax, Florence Oil, and spices, many homely supplies—spermaceti, "sarsparill", Stoughton and Bateman's drops, and a quantity of the all-powerful Seneca snakeroot, the last probably a home product

brought overland to the market. Caraway comfits are offered side by side with Epsom salts, rock candy with alum. Though there is no way to prove it, almost certainly the Washington quintet, on its way to and from school, occasionally halted at shop or market overcome by the temptation of caraway comfits.

They may have loitered also at the doorway of their cousins, the Lewises, newly moved to town from nearer the seaboard. Fielding Lewis had married Catherine, the daughter of Augustine Washington's brother. When their first child was baptized, the year following, its two godmothers were Mrs. Washington and a neighbor who afterward had a grandson named Robert E. Lee. Mary Washington was to stand for many another baby after the Lewis boy. Godmothering and gardening were her only avocations.

Nothing is left of the home at Ferry Farm except the good green earth on which it stood, an ancient linden tree, and a small out house that once served as an office for a certain young surveyor when he worked at home. If the old picture could flash back before our eyes we should doubtless see the dwelling itself, a barn, a dairy, a smokehouse, and one or two cabins. There may have been a dozen servants on the place, descendants, perhaps, of the young slave woman mentioned in Mary Hewe's will and of "Jo and Jack and the boy Tome" left by Joseph Ball along with the Rappahannock acres to his youngest daughter. It must have taken a good many laborers to run the farm, and probably not one of the

negroes could have been spared; but they were an expense and a responsibility, too, and doubtless in more than one case an extraordinary nuisance.

If, however, Mrs. Washington was as stern as her reputation pictures her, she was able to hold them all in hand, as well as the four little boys and their sister. Perhaps a certain amount of sternness was needed at Ferry Farm. But a great deal more than sternness went into the keeping up of that home—fortitude and industry, also, foresight and patience, and with it all that admixture of sane kindness that even the graceless young visitor from Choptank could not forget.

Had the head of the house kept a diary—the last thing on earth that she would ever have thought of doing—many a day's record would make, in this present era, remarkable reading. She must have risen by dawn, summer and winter. At all times there was the oversight of farm, house, and children, and the hundred unnamed duties that her three departments of labor constantly involved. Then in their season came housecleaning, preserving, pounding out and brewing simples, raising young fowls, planting the garden. In the winter the children must be got off to school every morning, and all the year round their mending done and their small ailments tended. It is not likely that she found much leisure for visiting, either around the home neighborhood or over in Fredericksburg. That leisure would come later on, more of it than she wanted; yet awhile she was up to her ears in that oldest and most honorable of

occupations, intensive motherhood, and she was not to be diverted from it.

So that first vigorous time of her life on the Rappahannock went by, one busy day following on the heels of another, one season's beauty drifting into the beauty of the next after the casual fashion of the Virginia year. Country born and country bred, she knew every change by heart, and the names of roadside weeds and garden herbs, and all the manifold ways of the weather.

Spring comes early in Virginia; winters are brief and cold and summers long. Autumn, from September to Christmas, is the glory time. Down at Ferry Farm the twelve months went by in a shining, familiar procession, year after year. The last snow heap had scarcely trickled into the river before dogwood blossoms were shining silver-white in the woods and lilacs were blowing at the back door. A little later mocking-birds began, singing all night in the warm moonlight, and the corn grew breast high unless a drought was on the land, and the tobacco flourished. By August the crops were nearly ripe and St. George's spire across the river stood almost hidden in a hot haze. Then in September, after long heat, crickets began to flute in the browning grass, forerunners of change, and aster and sumac and goldenrod brightened the roadside and outlined the zigzag of old rail fences. With October frost fell suddenly in the night, bringing the chestnuts *plunk* to the ground and sugaring the persimmons. By the end of that month the foliage was in full color and the Rappahannock went by

like a river of glory. Often snow did not fly till nearly Christmas.

Ferry Farm lies so quiet, now, along its green slope, that on still fall afternoons it would not seem an incredible thing to hear, far echoed, the shouts of little Washingtons homeward bound from a chestnut hunt. If sound lasted as old trees and rivers and fields last, they could be heard distinctly enough, and even the patter of shoeless feet on the hard paths and shrill, quaint-worded, inconsequential talk.

The management of five young lives and a good-sized estate is quite enough to narrow a woman's social outlook to some extent and considerably limit her goings and comings. Mary Washington probably spent most of her time between the fence lines of the home farm. She was too busy to be lonely, and she must have had, furthermore, a special resource—her long, country-bred knowledge of nature, a living intimacy with the earth, so to speak, with the ways of growing things, of weather and tides, of the primitive blacks in her care, of the life that went on all around her in barnyard and wood and field. That was the sort of interest that gave her existence its main impetus. After she was an old woman, with two wars weathered and all her own generation outlived, she was still thinking of these things. The earth, the hearth, life near its source, such were her main concerns from first to last.

The eldest of the five children was at that period and thereafter the one that furnished her gravest problems.

No sooner was he out of his active little boyhood than she was faced with the puzzle of his eager and restless adolescence. Between the ages of ten and fifteen he had vibrated between Wakefield, Mount Vernon, and Ferry Farm. Lawrence Washington was forever wanting him, and he was never loath to respond. Mount Vernon was a fascinating place for any boy to visit, especially for a boy with the leanings of young George. The older brother would never be able to go to war again, for his health was failing fast, but his home was the rendezvous of naval officers from the British ships anchored near Alexandria, and through many a long dinner the boy, seated with the navy men and with Lord Thomas Fairfax, another constant visitor, William Fairfax of Belvoir, his agent, and numerous gentlemen from the neighboring plantations, listened avidly to talk of battles and campaigns, talk so vivid that at times he could almost smell gunpowder. Nor did the great-grandson of John Washington and William Ball listen in vain. Shortly he began to dream of the British navy.

Fighting Lawrence egged the dream on. So did Lord Fairfax, who for years had been watching the tall, alert lad with an appraising eye. But the notion did not receive much encouragement at home. Time after time when the boy went down to Ferry Farm the question was mooted. Mrs. Washington was against the idea from the outset. It must have struck her as grotesque. Why should the son of a peace-loving country gentleman, the heir to good property in a quiet land, take to the high

seas, and that before he was sixteen years old? She must have felt, poor lady, as the argument thickened, much in the predicament of a hen who has hatched out a duckling. And her consternation, though more dignified than that of a hen under similar circumstances, was just as great.

But it was an uneven fight from the start. Arrayed against her stood the stepson to whose judgment she had often referred; Lord Fairfax, a force to be reckoned with; William Fairfax, whom she greatly esteemed; and the importunate boy himself. Nor was that all. When, as a last resort, she submitted the case to a doctor's opinion, she was advised that young George was thoroughly seaworthy and that, in point of fact, nothing could more surely serve his well-being than a year or two in the Royal Navy.

This last argument, perhaps, was the one that shook her resolution. It could not be denied that the youth was growing too fast for his strength; he was already a giant, and there was no home-brewed simple that could stop him. Two of her husband's children had died young; Lawrence was in pitiably poor health, and his only child was an invalid. What if there were some weak strain in the family, and the doctor had given wise advice? In her perplexity she wrote to her brother, Joseph Ball of Stratford-by-Bow; but his answer was slow in coming. She gave her grudging consent to the plan; and Lawrence and Lord Fairfax, striking instantly while the iron was at least tepid, put through the matter of the

commission. In a remarkably short time George Washington had on a midshipman's uniform, dirk and all, and was about to be off.

If at this juncture Mary Washington's famous jaw had been a little stronger, our country might be a kingdom today. But again her resolution weakened, this time in the other direction. This brought further discussion, which had apparently encouraging results. Then a mutual friend in Fredericksburg, a Mr. Jackson, was appealed to by both sides. A little too partial for a referee was Mr. Jackson. He wrote to the fuming Lawrence: "I am afraid Mrs. Washington is wavering again."

That message must have brought things to a head. Lawrence probably came down to the farm, for the mother seems to have shown signs of final surrender. But while she hesitated, the dream was lost. Joseph Ball, that arbiter of young men's destinies, reached his long arm across the sea and put a hard, practical finger into the family pie. His letter which had delayed so unconscionably came sailing up the Rappahannock at last on a lazy packet, just before the new midshipman got under weigh. It was a stuffy letter full of pomposities, but it turned the tide of history.

"I understand," Ball wrote, "that you have been advised to put your son George to sea. I think he had better be apprentice to a tinker; for a common sailor before the mast has by no means the liberty of a subject; for they will cut and slash him and use him like a negro, or rather like a dog. He must not be too hasty to be rich,

but go on gently with patience as things will naturally go, without aiming to be a fine gentleman before his time."

The London lawyer may have had a blunt epistolary style, but he knew how to give his phrases a knife-like edge. "Apprentice to a tinker," "a common sailor before the mast," "put your son George to sea," "they will cut and slash him" . . . . Mary Washington's blue blood, which had been running calmly for years, began to boil. Moreover,—and this was what turned the scales,—the strongest instinct of her nature, the impulse to protect her young, arose suddenly in all its strength and took charge of the situation. It is possible that she might have stood the reference to the tinker and the common sailor; but the pen-and-ink picture of cruel physical treatment was too much. Years afterwards some poetic admirer called her a Roman matron; so she may have been, but at this particular crisis she was merely a common variety of mother. Her mind was made up, now, once and for all. Driving to Mount Vernon, all those long marshy miles, she descended on the plotters and delivered her ultimatum.

It must have been a highly uncomfortable time for every one concerned. The new midshipman's luggage was already stowed away on a British man-of-war riding at anchor in the Potomac. If he and Lawrence and old Lord Fairfax made a little drama of getting it off, they cannot be greatly blamed. The mother herself, like every

mother at such a time, was in the hardest position of all. But her decision was final.

Mary Washington had won the first naval victory ever won by a woman, if we except qualified successes like that of Artemisia at Salamis; her triumph, though, must have been mixed with a good deal of unhappiness. The thwarted midshipman no doubt took his disappointment with a fairly good grace, for youth rebounds like India rubber. But for Lawrence Washington the outcome was more than a disappointment, it was an unequivocal defeat. He was ill and depressed; his days were numbered, and he knew it. In this stalwart young brother he had seen splendid material for the carrying on of his own high hopes which he must give up so early in life; and now an over-cautious woman had frustrated his last plan. If for a while therefore he felt coldly towards his stepmother, it is scarcely strange.

As Mary Washington drove back, past the old site of Epsiwassen and down across the Potomac flats, she felt sore at heart, no doubt, for what had had to be done. But she must have thought, too, of Augustine Washington, and how he would probably have made the same decision for their son. And there was indubitable comfort in feeling that she had been faithful to her trust.

CHAPTER XI

The disagreement apparently did not make any deep rift between Mount Vernon and Ferry Farm. That is pretty well proved by the fact that for the next twelve months or so George, the bone of contention, spent more time than ever at his brother's home. He was still under his mother's control and could scarcely have stayed there against her consent. But he did stay there; and in addition, as though eager to make all amends, she engaged a tutor to teach him the science he loved best, mathematics.

In all that time Lord Fairfax kept watching him, more and more impressed by the promise which he discerned in the big awkward boy. And as he watched he made a new plan. The nobleman did not take gracefully to having his wishes crossed. When, a few years before, a young Englishwoman, careless of his wealth, his title, and his Oxford education, had crossed them with one decisive negative, he had made his way hastily to America. And here in the new world another pretty scheme had been upset by the stepmother of his best friend. So, after possessing his soul for a while, he made a fresh plan. An able

surveyor was needed in his wide lands farther to the west, and young Washington, he decided, big, strong, and quick at mathematics, was just the chap to meet the need.

This time things went without a hitch. There was no real timidity in Washington's mother. Her brother's broadsides had done heavy work, but she had no intention of trying to keep her six-footer at home for good. So away he went into the Shenandoah Valley, measuring off queer, tiptilted acres that seemed strangely unlike the gently rolling lands of King George and Prince William. The new commission was taking him into that same mysterious country which Spottswood and his Horseshoe Knights had opened up when Mary Washington was a slim admiring little girl. It was still a wilderness full of red men; the adventurer there would have to face perils beside which life before the mast was mere child's play. Mrs. Washington must have known that. But if she made any objection it has missed going into the record. Joseph Ball would doubtless have gladly interfered, but this time he did not have the opportunity to do so.

His nephew, having gracefully beaten his navy dirk into a surveyor's rod, was over the Blue Ridge and far away long before word could reach Stratford-by-Bow. And the new surveyor's mother buckled down afresh to the routine of daily living. If her jaw set itself a trifle more firmly, it was not the set of obstinacy but the effort to stand with the aid of her muscles what the parent of

a young giant backed by a well-meaning patron must expect to stand.

Common sense, whatever Lawrence Washington and the Fairfaxes and Mr. Jackson of Fredericksburg may have thought to the contrary, was one of the strongest ingredients of her character. She knew well enough that her fate was not to be an iota different from the fate of all mothers since the world began. Her five would all go, somehow and somewhere, one by one. She would do what she could to manage the goings, no doubt about that, but meanwhile their food must be prepared and their buttons sewed on to the best of her marked ability. And so they were.

The only daughter was the next to leave, but there was nothing to worry about in her adventure, since she was going the way of all women. This Elizabeth, one year younger than the first-born, was so like him in appearance that when she donned his attire, even after they were full-grown adults, she could pass for him with everybody except the members of the family. The story is still handed round Fredericksburg that when she was a middle-aged woman Betty Lewis used to say to her nieces and nephews, "Do you want to see General Washington in the twinkling of an eye?"—and then, with her long hair quickly knotted into a queue, and with the tilt of a three-cornered hat and the flutter of a cape, she would stand before them the living image of the commander-in-chief of the Continental Army. A tall girl, ruddy-faced from paddling in the river and climb-

ing hills, yet a "mannerly maid," she became a bride before she was long out of the nursery. The bridegroom was Fielding Lewis of Marmion and Fredericksburg, a fine, upstanding young Virginian who was to mean much to his country as time went on. After the death of his wife Catherine he had gone often in his loneliness to visit the cousins across the river, with the not uncommon result that before long he was paying his addresses, as they used to say then, to the daughter of the house.

A mother of today would feel that her only girl might in all fitness tarry a little longer to repay some of the love and care of a lifetime. But such an idea would not have entered a colonial mother's head. Marriage with what it entailed was the whole duty of woman,—even their tutors taught them that,—and the earlier a girl began to do her duty the better. If Betty Washington had lingered on at the farm, no matter how busily and usefully, her mother would have felt not only disconcerted but even faintly ashamed.

The girl was making a brilliant match. Lewis had wealth, worth, and high social position. Moreover, and this must have been one of his best assets in the mother's eyes, he had every intention of living on in Fredericksburg, where he owned large interests in the Principia Iron Works and was already planning a handsome residence. In addition to gaining a son, she would keep her daughter. All the same, when the wedding day arrived, and she sat in the seat of honor awaiting the ceremony,

there must have been a slight sinking of the heart under her best brocade. She hated brocades, to begin with. It was a sturdy heart, however, and no doubt it rallied in plenty of time. Mary Washington was more than ordinarily reticent, and it is the most reticent who suffer the most; but the very thing that keeps them silent makes them strong. So if she suffered over the impending change it is not likely that any one else knew it.

George Washington, by this time advanced to the dignity of public surveyor of all Western Virginia, withdrew from the Alleghany wilderness for long enough to escort the bride and "give her away" after the grave provision of the Episcopal ritual. He was only eighteen at the time, and Betty only seventeen. As they walked into the room they must have looked for all the world like a pair of tall twins trying to keep their faces straight for a solemn occasion. The girl, to judge from her portrait, was not pretty, but she had the height and dignity of bearing that had come to her in double measure from her parents. The ceremony took place at Ferry Farm, and the bride wore heavy white satin and high-heeled slippers with ball buckles as her brother's bride wore a few years later. She was marrying a widower with children, as her mother, her grandmother, and her great-grandmother had done before her; there were strange parallels along through Mary Ball Washington's life—this was but one of many.

When the wedding feast was over and the guests all gone, her thoughts were probably the long, long thoughts

KENMORE, HOME OF FIELDING AND BETTY WASHINGTON LEWIS

of a little past middle age. As age is reckoned now, she was still a young woman, being only forty-three; but she had already lived through nearly the whole cycle of woman's experience:—wifehood, motherhood, widowhood, with all that such experience involves. And Ferry Farm must have looked rather gray even under the softening sky. But whatever she felt, she realized with her sturdy common sense that the woman who marries and knows long motherhood has inevitably four lives to live:—her own youth, the childhood and youth of her children, the period when they are adjusting themselves to life, and the years when they are all gone. She had now turned the third corner. Meanwhile, there remained at home Samuel, Charles, and John Augustine; even after a wedding feast they would be hungry, and supper must be prepared.

The next year Lawrence Washington sailed to the West Indies on a belated quest after health, taking George with him for companionship. The sea, after all, for her son, and a port as strange and foreign to her imagination as any in the world! But there seems to have been no opposition. In the same year the first of Betty Lewis's prodigious tribe was born. He came on a November day, as Mary Washington herself had come, and was ushered into the world by the came crude methods. His grandmother was on hand, no doubt, for in those days grandmothers were the high priestesses at these interesting rites,—as they would be still if trained nurses had not been evolved to deprive them of the

privilege. The two brothers had not yet sailed, and the obliging George took time to stand beside his mother at the font of St. George's and assume the spiritual guardianship of the infant Fielding.

The child must have been a comfort to both women in the hard year that followed, for slow letters trickling in from the far-away islands brought bad news only. Lawrence Washington's decline was rapid. In the midst of nursing him the younger brother contracted smallpox and lay ill for weeks in a strange city with, it may well be imagined, very little caring for. Recovering, he came home for a hurried trip for the purpose of taking his sister-in-law out to her husband. He saw his mother, but it could have been scarcely more than a glimpse that they had. His face was badly scarred from smallpox, and he was gaunt and weary.

Lawrence lingered a few months longer. He was scarcely more than a youth still, and so able to muster new strength over and over again. But it was his last battle; he died soon after they brought him home. In his will he made George Washington residuary legatee to Mount Vernon in the event of his own child's death. That was not the only provision made for the beloved brother. Apparently he could not find it in his heart to forego his dream that the youth should be a fighter. Certainly no stone was left unturned to make the dream come true. Before leaving Virginia for the last time, he had given to the young man his own place in the Virginia Militia, which meant making the nineteen-year-

old a major and district adjutant. How Mary Washington took this has not been recorded; that it was a blow cannot be doubted.

Lawrence's death was a severe loss to the family at Ferry Farm. He had given his father's wife strong loyalty, and she would miss him more and more as the years went on and her younger boys grew to manhood lacking his control. The quarrel about the oldest son had done no great damage. When, in his extremity, Lawrence needed his younger brother, she had let the boy respond. For if there was a streak of iron in her nature, put there largely by circumstances and necessity, there was a broader streak of pure gold.

Her iron was to stand her in good stead in the years that immediately followed. As the century rounded into its second half those forces and factors that had been so long at work in the New World gathered for an outbreak. Europe was still troubled under the effect of her hundred-year-old quarrels about religion, about succession to thrones, about a score of other bitternesses. And England kept up her policy of maintaining the balance of power, throwing her influence now this way, now that, against whichever power appeared to be getting too strong. At the same time she steadily devoted her energies to the cultivation of trade and the suppression of all that threatened it, thus, more instinctively than through conscious policy, progressing surely towards her main objective, economic domination of the world.

In the meantime, the eyes of the English colonists in

America were turned anxiously towards the mother land, for at last the long looked for aid against the French was to be sent. Throughout the early history of America there had been increasing conflict between the French and the English in North America, but the quarrels had been localized and did not involve the two nations beyond their range. During Mary Washington's life a former Virginia governor had led an expedition against Port Royal in Nova Scotia, and later on the New England colonies had captured Louisburg, but these achievements had accomplished little in the long run—certainly they had not expelled the French from North America or lessened the menace that these adventurers offered the English settlers. Out in the interior of the continent the French were very active, constantly moving to positions that threatened the English more and more, and with equal persistence cementing new friendships or consolidating old alliances with the Indian tribes. From the outset the English settlers had been handicapped by two racial inhibitions: their reluctance to move out of easy reach of the sea—that strength on which the Anglo-Saxon pins his surest faith—and their inborn distrust of the natives as an alien people had given the French, who were free from such taboos, a considerable advantage, and they had not been backward about taking it. While the Eastern planters sold their tobacco crops and raced horses with their earnings, and while the more venturesome English in the interior made sporadic attempts to meet the situation, the

French, aided willingly enough by the Indians, were slowly pressing towards the Atlantic year by year.

When Virginia waked up at last, the enemy was in very truth at her back door. In 1753, as far down as the edge of Lancaster in the Northern Neck, word had penetrated that somebody must go into Pennsylvania and deal with the French—politely, after their own fashion, if possible, otherwise if necessary. And who should be chosen for the delicate and dangerous job but the young adjutant general of the Northern Division, recently major in the Militia, still further back, for a brief hour or two, midshipman in the Royal Navy?

Poor Mary Washington! She had shorn him of one uniform only to see him don another. And again she made her protest. It was a protest as old as the ages, framed in the identical words, perhaps, of the mothers of the first warriors in the world, for the primal emotions do not alter with time. "Oh, this fighting and killing!" she is said to have cried when the news was brought to her.

The surveying expedition beyond the Blue Ridge, with all its difficulties, was nothing to what this undertaking must be. "I am sending a person of distinction," Governor Dinwiddie wrote to the Governor of Pennsylvania. And verily it would have been a waste of time to send any other kind of person. The young officer was to travel four hundred wintry miles, half of them through a region bristling with hostile Indians. There was peril in every step of the journey.

After the first outburst of remonstrance the mother gave way. She must have done so, in any case, for her son's will was cut from the same piece as her own, and nothing could have deterred him. But the great point is that he went with her blessing. At the last moment she commended him to the Power that has always wrought as effectively in the wilderness as on the sea-coast. So he set forth, the person of distinction, going afoot from Winchester with a knapsack on his shoulder and accompanied only by a servant man. And his mother took up her daily routine again, for even though nations warred there were innumerable things that must be done at Ferry Farm, and who but she was to do them? She must have felt a thrill of pride there on the quiet Rappahannock slope whether or not she said so—that with all his youth and inexperience such a trust should have been reposed in him. But if her pride was not blurred a little by foreshadowings of his peril, then she was a remarkable mother indeed.

On his return, months later, the House of Burgesses promptly printed his journal, a faithful report of the expedition. The diarist had written sturdily, not making any undue fuss over his terrible experiences yet at the same time not belittling them, and the record must have made hard reading for his mother.

In the following spring he was off again as second in command under Colonel Fry. This time his formidable itinerary took him over the main ridge of the Alleghanies, into the midst of a hornet-swarm of Indi-

ans led by the French and into the perilous encampment that towards midsummer became Fort Necessity —actually as well as in name. Word of that disastrous campaign filtered slowly back to Virginia and wrought its keenest damage on the northern bank of the Rappahannock. Washington himself came home a little later, worn out with hardship and responsibility, but with his jaw—that famous maternal inheritance—set firmly. In spite of the outcome of Fort Necessity he had fought a good fight, and Virginia knew it, and when he came blushing to his feet in the House of Burgesses to receive public commendation of his services, Mary Washington knew it too, and again she must have thrilled. But again also her pride was darkened by her most natural apprehension. The trouble at the border would mean war in dead earnest sooner or later, and her headstrong son would certainly be involved in it. This was far worse than lashings before the mast. Had she saved him from the frying-pan only to see him leap into the fire?

The autumn of 1754, however, was a happy one for her. In October the young colonel resigned his commission. It seems that the Virginia authorities, with that kind of caution that would seem cowardice and that kind of pretended fairness that would seem rank injustice to a straightforward person like George Washington,—who was also very practical and not without a sense of his own dignity and importance,—had issued certain equivocal rules governing the rank and authority of the militia officers. These rules not only in effect reduced

the rank Washington had won in the Fort Necessity campaign, but made it unlikely that a force in which they were operative would be effective. Accordingly he resigned. It turned out to be only a short-lived retirement to the safety of civil life; but when his mother heard the news she at least knew that with the first of the winter he would be safe at Mount Vernon, not freezing or starving or losing his scalp, but deep in tilling the soil and making a home. In the blessedness of the sudden reaction from anxiety she probably found that autumn the happiest of her long life.

After Colonel Washington had looked over the affairs of his large estate,—for with the death of Lawrence's heir Mount Vernon had passed into his ownership,—he made his way down to the Rappahannock. It was doubtless near Christmas that he came, when snow had covered the fields of Ferry Farm and a great open fire flamed in the front room. Whatever the date, there was a large family dinner, for that is the Virginia way, with the Lewises over from Fredericksburg, and Hannah Ball Travers, too, and—most appropriately—Mildred Gregory Willis, the good aunt who so short a while ago had held the guest of honor in her arms and made fair promises for his soul.

It was more his body than his soul that was worrying them all now—that lanky body that could not be persuaded to stay out of the way of Indian arrows and French bullets; but at Christmas time, with the adventurer back, they could not worry over much. Mildred

Gregory must have stolen more than one curious glance at her godson as he sat peacefully eating old ham and brandied peaches. The serious-faced Fielding Lewis probably watched him with interest, too, and the trio of younger brothers with active delight. It was the calm before the storm, but it was a deep and cozy calm, and at least it gave the mother a chance to draw a good long breath.

She needed it, for troublous times were ahead. Fighting was on in real earnest, now, and George Washington could no more keep out of the thick of it than he could live without breathing. In fact, as Woodrow Wilson so graphically points out in his biography, it had been the young Virginian's hand that set the war ablaze the summer morning not long past when in Great Meadows his men fired on a party of French scouts. That hand would soon be at the swordhilt again. He spent the winter on his Potomac estate, riding up and down the Mount Vernon plantations, counting his stock, calculating boundaries, directing work, but his heart was not entirely there. When two regiments of red-coated British regulars disembarked at Alexandria, in plain sight from his window, he could tarry at home no longer. General Braddock, bluff British commander, recently arrived to take charge of the campaign, offered him a position on his staff, and he accepted the offer. Braddock was headed straight into the wilderness with Fort Duquesne as his objective; there was bound to be fighting now of the fiercest kind. The cloud that in

Mary Ball's earliest years had lain lightly along the far horizon now covered the entire sky, and the tempest had broken.

When word arrived of her son's new plan, she drove up to Mount Vernon, a long and wearisome journey, to see him before he went. And once there she used the old, old arguments—not eloquent arguments, for she had no grace of speech, but terribly earnest and sincere—to keep him from going. Those who stop to think will understand her attitude without any difficulty. She could have had only a meagre realization of the real state of affairs. In all her quiet life down in the seclusion of the lower Northern Neck on lonely river farms, war could have meant nothing more to her than romantic rumors floating in from across the sea. There were faint rumblings now and again, but they came from far, and she had never yet actually sniffed cannon smoke. The idea of an actual war in the New World must have struck her as almost fantastic. Yet at the same time that she underestimated the general danger she realized that peril was in store for her son. The military and political situation at the border was a vague mystery, but she had a clear enough mental picture, left over from tales of her childhood, of Indians in ambush and weirdly dressed soldiery whom she still thought of as the Romish hordes of Louis XIV. Her reasoning was very natural: England had always attended to Louis and his like, and always would: why, then, were the Virginians mustering and marching?

Nor is that all. By nature and by training this woman was all for conservation of life. She had been brought up in rather a strict and narrow school. In her day although no one, certainly no woman, was expected to save humanity, every female was confidently expected to produce it. More than that, she was earnestly enjoined to guard and protect it. So Mary Ball and her successor, Mary Washington, early imbibed not only a sense of the woman's responsibility for the family but a sense of her authority over it. In her own case the untimely death of her husband increased both feelings. Left alone with five children, four of them sons, she was fully convinced that her bounden duty lay in looking out for their welfare as she saw it and in exacting their obedience. It was this conviction and her adherence to it that won her the name of a stern disciplinarian and a woman of some hardness and not a little obstinacy. The truth is, probably, that she was hard where duty seemed involved and that her real and underlying tenderness was generally inarticulate. At any rate, in this particular crisis she was merely obeying a law of nature as old as womanhood—to protect the creature she had brought into the world. There was no subtlety in her. She could not see the finer shadings of the situation, the fact that in holding him back from the frontier she might be putting him into even greater peril. Her course was prompted by instinct and impulse, and she never thought of questioning the right or wrong of it. So, armed with the most primitive of all weapons, she faced her son for a hard fight.

But she was pitted here against a tremendous paradox. With her whole might she was resisting the demands of war, and yet it had been that very strength that produced the warrior. Her opponent was remarkably like her—in strength of mind and body, in resolution, in force of will. Now, it is one of the ironies of life that sameness creates opposition. In the conflict that day at Mount Vernon, therefore, the contestants were fighting with identical weapons, even though from different spheres. And for one of them there was no chance from the very outset, because strangely enough, and yet naturally enough too, the conscious part of her was set in array against the very force that the unconscious part of her had brought into being. No fighter could have stood up under that; she went down to defeat.

George Washington must have been a very patient man. And if he had patience, that, too, came from her by that same theory of heredity that makes a firstborn son peculiarly like his mother. So this must be written in to her credit when for the third time she has to be recorded as trying to interrupt his destiny.

As a last resort he used a weapon that she herself had put into his hand.

"Madam," he is said to have remarked with respectful finality, "the God to whom you commended me when first I went to war will be my protector still."

People who knew his mother have passed down the word that she had an irresistible smile, half reluctant, wholly attractive, which came into play sometimes when

her sense of humor got the better of her dignity. It must have flashed out at this juncture.

Anyway, the battle was over. Mary Ball Washington was the granddaughter as well as the mother of a soldier. She knew defeat when she saw it, and she knew how to bear it when it must be borne. So without further ado she turned her horses' heads southward and went back to fight out her part of the war—a sturdy part, too, —in the fields above the Rappahannock.

CHAPTER XII

All this time Betty Lewis's family was increasing steadily, and nothing could have been more fortunate. The crises of life and death are closely interwoven, and Mary Washington could not brood too heavily—even if she had been given to brooding—over the possible loss of her son while her daughter had such need of her. As a matter of fact it was soldiers that the two were so earnestly engaged in bringing into the world, but by the great law of compensation the babies served the more immediate purpose of comforting the two women in their time of anxiety. Betty's second son was christened John Augustine in 1752, his fourteen-year-old uncle Charles standing for him. Three years later Charles performed the same office for a third boy. So in that hot summer of the Fort Duquesne expedition Mary Washington was very busy both at Ferry Farm and at Kenmore.

It is said that between many women and their oldest sons a psychic bond exists so strong that the mother has sometimes a clairvoyant sense of her son's peril. But Washington's mother was anything on earth but psychic,

and on the morning of Braddock's defeat she could have no intimation, mercifully enough, that her firstborn, just up from a fortnight of fever, was in the thick of battle, spurring through a rain of bullets, rallying his Virginians, and changing horses as fast as they were shot under him. This is the glory of Mary Washington, that even if she had known, she would not have made great outcry. The thing that caused people to call her hard was the same thing that helped her endure with fortitude what could not be helped; it was the same thing, indeed, "given and devised" like a legacy, that was taking her son through his stupendous trials.

But babies, however tenderly loved, cannot serve as a complete stop-gap for long drawn-out anxieties. In the "passage" at the farmhouse stood a tall old clock—it stands today in the parlor at Kenmore—that must have measured out for its owner many a lonely hour of acute anxiety. There were three other sons to look after at home, but she must have felt, and with good reason, that before long they too would be gone.

So her own fight went on, as bitter as any man's struggle in the front line. News came in with heavy slowness, and when it did come it was hard to bear. Washington's letters were irregular; it is not easy to keep up a correspondence on horseback. And they were never garrulous at best. But mothers are adept at reading what is left unwritten, and this one knew well enough what the young soldier was going through, and suffered accordingly.

The good neighbors in King George and Spottsylvania and Stafford did not neglect her—the Traverses, the Willises, the Fitzhughs of Chatham, the Mercers of Marlborough; and kinsfolk from "down the Neck", Augustine Washington from Wakefield, the Bewdley Balls, and dozens of others must have turned in at the farm gate many a day, on their journey up to Fredericksburg. Of Elizabeth Bonhum we hear no more. If she could have been near during the years of war they would have passed, for Mary, much more gently and easily.

But they did pass somehow, and come to an end at last. She heard from Washington from time to time as he patrolled the three hundred and fifty miles of frontier, often under fire from ambushed savages. She followed him in her mind's eye to Boston in 1756—to that vaguely imagined city as distant as London, as distance was counted by time, and far more alien. The details of the journey may never have reached her, but if she could have known how he rode, all her girlhood would have surged back, for he went in a uniform of buff and blue, with red on cloak and sword and the Washington coat of arms on his horses' fittings. Governor Spottswood, the hero of her very young days, had not been any such figure of romance as that. But she probably pictured New England as another frontier only, and wondered how much farther he would fare. Then in the next year but one, 1758, came tidings that the French had been finally defeated and that the war was over.

In the following summer Mary wrote a letter to her

brother in England. She wrote it with heavy and obvious difficulty, and he should have prized it more than he probably did. Even as late as 1759 the art of letter writing had few devotees beyond those who made it almost a profession. The slowness of the postal service was partly to blame for this. It was one thing to compose a long, eager message, and another to realize that there could be no hope of an answer for months. As for Mary Washington, she never put pen to paper if she could help it. But on that July day, when she was at ease in the backwater left by the tide of war, and a good chance presented itself for sending a letter with a fair amount of despatch, she overcame her reluctance and wrote.

It was not to be expected that her spelling should have improved with the passage of time. As a matter of fact, even long after those desultory days there were no fixed rules for spelling; the whole matter remained for many a decade in a state of flux. Four years before Mary Washington wrote her letter, the ponderous Dr. Johnson had published his Dictionary and given the English language an accepted authority on spelling, but this did not have any immediate effect in increasing the attention paid to orthography. The line of least resistance was apparently the sole criterion. As far along as the '80's of that century, young Miss Lee of Westmoreland, writing to young Miss Brent, cheerfully describes the costume of a neighborhood girl as "a lead-coloured habbit with a lylack lute-string scirt." As for grammar, that fared just as badly.

So it was not lack of learning that made such an unwilling scribe of Mary Washington; it was more that her interests and talents had lain all her life, and still lay, in another direction. The two occupations of having children and making homes had absorbed all her energies for many a year; and she had been highly successful in them. In letter-writing there was a certain element of futurity, of uncertainty, that was distasteful to her practical mind. Nevertheless, her only brother meant a great deal to her, and at long intervals the craving to communicate with him mastered her aversion to ink-pot and quill.

Dear Brother, Having soe good an oppertunity by Mr. Frankling I could [not] lett slipe I inquire by all oppertunity from you & am glad to hear you and my sister and Mr. Downman and his Lady keeps your health soe well I some times hear you intend [to] Virginia once more. I should be proud to see you. I have known a great Deal of trouble since I see you thear was no end to my troble while George was in the Army but he has now given it up pray Give my kind Love to my sister and Cozen Downman & I am Dear Brother your loving and affectionate Sister. July 26, 1759.

Joseph Ball must have frowned a little as he finished reading this letter. The labored abstractions were perfectly in order, of course; it would have been disconcerting not to have her refer to "my sister," his wife, and "Mr. Downman and his Lady,"—the writer's own niece and nephew-in-law,—but he could have asked a little more: a few comments on the aftermath of the war,

some of the gossip from the Northern Neck that percolated so thinly to England, at least a word or two about the brilliant nephew whom he himself had snatched from goodness knew what and saved for distinction. The young man's achievements had moved him to solemn pride; it had given him "a sensable pleasure", he wrote, to hear of his martial spirit "nigh Ohio." Now he wanted to hear also how the country regarded his—Joseph Ball's —handiwork.

But though Mrs. Washington had touched on the subject of her son it was only to inscribe with infinite labor the obvious fact that there had been no end to her trouble while he was in the army. The Stratford lawyer in all likelihood missed the pathos of that; he itched for something more concrete than a reference to the emotions. And indeed there was much that she could have told him, for his nephew had emerged from the war a highly distinguished man, and Ferry Farm well knew it by this time, and Fredericksburg and the Northern Neck, —glowing with pride,—and the whole of the country. England knew it, too, to some extent; but Ball would have welcomed the details from home.

There was more than martial news, also, that might have been told, for by this time the young man had been married for six months. Before he was out of the army that phase of his destiny had come around. Riding down to Williamsburg under orders, one fine morning, —George Washington met life on horseback,—he galloped straight into his first and last serious love affair.

There was no reason why he should not marry without any waiting. He had reached the age of discretion, that much his worst enemy would have had to admit, and the big house at Mount Vernon needed a mistress, while military affairs in Virginia seemed settled for good and all. So at New Year of 1759 he was married to Martha Dandridge Custis, the daughter of John Dandridge and the widow of Daniel Parke Custis.

His mother must have smiled a little over the way things repeated themselves in her life. The young man was doing exactly what she, her father, her mother, and her daughter had done—taking to himself a ready-made family. For Mrs. Custis had children as Joseph Ball, Mary Johnson, Augustine Washington, and Fielding Lewis had all had when they married for the second time.

The wedding took place at the Custis home in New Kent County with all the *éclat* of the regulation Virginia wedding and the added glamour of military splendor, the Rev. David Mossam of St. Peter's parish officiating. If Mrs. Washington attended the wedding,—and she probably did,—she went in state, as befitted the mother of so distinguished a bridegroom. Her journey was a long one, and the time of the year a difficult season for travel. The route led south of the Rappahannock, across the northeast corner of Spottsylvania County, along the Mataponi River through Caroline, short-cutting through King William and Hanover, then over the Paumunky River into New Kent. As she rolled down

over the heavy roads in the great carriage, she was bearing directly toward Williamsburg, the objective of that other long-ago coach ride which she may or may not have taken, according to her rights in the "Dear Sukey" letter. Her hair was no longer flaxen, nor her color the color of May blossoms, but she had the look that means more than mere prettiness, the carving of the features that comes with the resolute doing of many duties and the facing of many hard issues. She had rounded out the third of her life's chapters, and as the carriage rolled homeward must have looked forward happily enough to the opening of spring. Her children were all married, now, and things would be a little lonely, but the war was over, and soon it would be time to have the fields plowed at Ferry Farm, to plant the garden, and clean house. Raising young chickens and lambs, mothering the latest baby in the Kenmore nursery—how infinitely more logical that seemed to her than shooting and being shot by red Indians! The tall clock in the farmhouse would measure off better days for her now.

When June came she wrote to her brother again—a longer letter than the first, though scarcely more explicit. She tells him nothing about the couple at Mount Vernon; about the new George Washington Lewis and the still newer Mary Lewis; of the marriage of her other sons—Samuel to Jane Champe, Charles to Mildred Thornton, John Augustine to Hannah Bushrod. Marriages, marriages, they were so common in Mary Washington's life—that was what people were for, to marry

and have children, and, incidentally, to keep those children in the world as long as possible! It did not occur to her to use up laborious words reporting such commonplaces. Her Samuel, for example, and the small John Lewis across the river were to have a total of ten wives; it would have taken more orthography than it was worth to make announcements of such mere every day affairs. No, her brother should hear no neighborhood gossip, but word that his own large "peace" of ground would seem distinctly in order. She was living very close to the soil now, knee-deep in summer corn and red clover, and her mind rested at last from wars and rumors of wars, from marrying and giving in marriage. So she wrote as it entered her head to write:

Dear Brother this comes by Capt. Nickelson you seem to blam me for no writing to you I doe a shour it is Not for want of very great Regard for you & the family but as I dont ship tobacco the Captains never call on me soe that I never know when tha come or when tha goe. I beleve you have got a very good overseer at this quarter now Capt. Newton has taken a large peace of ground from you which I dear say if you had been hear your Self it had not been Don Mr. Danial & his wife & family is well Cozen Hannah has been married and lost her husband She has one child a boy pray give my Love to Sister Ball and Mr. Downman & his Lady & am Dear Brother your loving Sister.

During the decade that followed, the Northern Neck basked in peace and prosperity under the favoring Virginia sun. All Mary Washington's portion of it, the long,

narrow stocking of land with hill counties at the top; King George, Stafford, Westmoreland and Richmond midway; Nothumberland at the heel; and Lancaster at the toe,—shone with the honor of having produced Colonel Washington. It had produced his mother, too, though that was slightly beside the point. But she came in for a share of his glory. All up and down the long deep road—still for a little while longer the king's highway—the carriages of the gentry rolled between tobacco-fields and corn meadows to Fredericksburg, and many turned in for an hour at the home of Colonel Washington's mother.

It was a thickly settled region now, full of large estates and small, with many a splendid manor house. Chatham topped a fine hill opposite Fredericksburg,—ghost-haunted Chatham, with an Indian cave on its northern slope, and five other seats of the Fitzhughs rising within a radius of a few miles,—Eagle's Nest and Bedford near the Potomac, Boscobel, Ravensworth, Belle-Air not much farther away. The Carters of Cleve called at Ferry Farm, the Spottswoods of Saltington, son and grandson of the Blue Ridge adventurer; the Masons of Chippewamsic,—George Mason's people,—the Grays of Traveler's Rest; and from farther down the Neck, the Stratford Lees, the Mount Airy Tayloes, the Landon Carters of Sabine Hall, with the specially welcomed Bewdley Balls, and now and then young Augustine Washington the Second of Wakefield.

Mary Washington could not have been a daughter

of the Northern Neck without being preëminently social-minded. So she enjoyed her visitors even if she did not go around much herself. From time to time her thoughts must have turned with satisfaction to Mount Vernon. Her son was living his peace-time life now, the life to which, so far as she could see, he had been born, —riding over his broad green acres, a gentleman farmer like Joseph Ball her father, and like William Ball her grandfather after he made up his mind to let the Stuarts fend for themselves. The latest Washington bride was handsome and young, and the children, Daniel Parke Custis and his little sister Patsy, were already taking strong hold on George Washington's affections.

The elder Madam Washington must have felt special interest in her daughter-in-law, for the widow Custis had been a person of distinction in New Kent on account of her wealth and social standing, though that would mean less to Washington's mother than that she was the wife of her eldest son.

The new Mrs. Washington was stately—almost queenly—much farther removed from the homely things of life than was the other. And yet she had a practical makeup, too, or at least she certainly came to it in time. There is a striking pen-picture given of her in a letter written exactly forty years after her marriage, by the wife of Colonel Edward Carrington, who with her husband, a great friend of Washington's, was visiting Mount Vernon. The letter is dated November 22, 1799. It makes Martha Washington seem very old at sixty-five, but then

it must be remembered that Mrs. Carrington herself was very young. She writes to her sister:

. . . We arrived at this remarkable mansion in perfect safety, where we experienced every mark of hospitality and kindness that the good old General's continued friendship to Col. C. could lead us to expect; his reception of my husband was that of a Brother; he took us each by the hand, and with a warmth of expression not to be described, pressed mine, and told me that I had conferred a favor never to be forgotten in bringing his old friend to see him, then bidding a servant to call the ladies, entertained us most facetiously till they appeared. Mrs. W., venerable, kind, and plain. . . .

In a second letter she writes:

. . . It is really an enjoyment to be here and to witness the tranquil happiness that reigns throughout the house, except now and then a little bustle occasioned by the young Squire Custis when he returns from hunting bringing in a *valiant deer,* as he terms it, that Grand pa and the Col. will devour. . . .

Mary Washington was not living when these passages were written,—Washington himself had only a fortnight longer to live,—but somehow the description of the Potomac home brings her, too, within very close range. She must have visited often at Mount Vernon before her visiting days were over, and the home was probably very little different in 1799 from what it was when she saw it. Mrs. Carrington makes as good a picture of the interior of the house as of its occupants:

. . . We repair to the old Lady's room which is precisely on the style of our good old Aunt's, that is to say, nicely fixed for

all sorts of work. On one side sits the chamber maid with her knitting, on the other a little coloured pet learning to sew, and an old decent woman with her table of shears cutting out negroes' winter clothes, while the good old lady directs them all; incessantly knitting herself and pointing out to me several pair of nice coloured stockings and gloves she had just finished and presenting me with a pair half done which she begs I will finish and wear for her sake. Her netting too is a great source of amusement and is so neatly done that all the younger part of the family are proud of trimming their dresses with it. . . . It is wonderful after a life spent as these good people have necessarily spent theirs to see them in retirement assume domestic manners that prevail in our country, when, but a year since they were forced to forego all these innocent delights which are so congenial to their years and tastes, to sacrifice to the parade of the drawing-room and levee. The recollection of these lost days as Mrs. W. calls them seems to fill her with regret, but the extensive knowledge she has gained in this general intercourse with persons from all parts of the world, has made her a most interesting companion, and having a vastly retentive memory, she presents an entire history of half a century.

The weather is too wintry to enjoy outdoor scenes, but as far as I can judge in a view from the windows, the little painting we have seen that hangs up in my friend's, Mrs. Wood's, drawing-room, furnishes a good specimen—every thing within doors is neat and elegant, but nothing remarkable except the paintings of different artists which have been sent as specimens of their talents—I think there are five portraits of the General, some done in Europe and some in America, that do honor to the painter. There are other specimens of the fine arts from various parts of the world that are admirably executed, and furnish pleasant conversation; besides these there is a complete greenhouse, which at this season is a vast, a great source of

pleasure. Plants from every part of the world seem to flourish in the neatly finished apartment, and from the arrangement of the whole I conclude that it is managed by a skillful hand—but whose I cannot tell. Neither the General or Mrs. W. seem more interested in it than the visitors. We have met with no company here, but are told that scarcely a week passes without some—and often more than is convenient or agreeable. Here, transient persons who call from curiosity are treated with civility, but never interfere with the order of the house, or the General's disposition of time, which is as regular as when at the head of the Army, or in the President's chair. Even friends who make a point of visiting him are left much to themselves, indeed scarcely see him from breakfast to dinner, unless he engages them in a ride, which is very agreeable to him; but from dinner till tea our time is most charmingly spent. Indeed one evening the General was so fascinating and drew my husband out into so many old stories relating to several campaigns where they had been much together, and had so many inquiries to make respecting their mutual friends particularly Kosiusco and Pulaski. . . .

It would mean much to know what Mary Washington thought of the greenhouse; in secret she may have scorned it ever so slightly. There had been for her girlhood, in Westmoreland and Lancaster, gardens of hundred-leaved roses and maidenhair ferns, but never a greenhouse. And at Ferry Farm she contented herself with borders of hardy annuals. The splendor of the Mount Vernon array was dazzling after the farm, though she probably would not have traded a single chrysanthemum bush for all of it—no, nor one yellow turnip-bloom.

At any rate, if Martha Washington was as diligent with her needle in the earlier years at Mount Vernon as later on, she must have found favor in the eyes of her mother-in-law. But in any case, she made Washington a good wife and that was all that Mary Washington would have dreamed of asking.

Down on the lower farm, now, a period of strong serenity set in. The woman who cares chiefly for life's simplest things—the shine of the hearth, the smell of freshly plowed earth in an April garden, the number of eggs in a new-found nest, may miss much; but she likewise possesses much. And when she has, in addition, a deft hand with very young babies, and plenty of material to practice her deftness on, she cuts a more or less happy figure up to the last.

CHAPTER XIII

THE Washington place lay almost directly opposite Fredericksburg. From the farmhouse windows, with the sun at just the proper angle, could be seen other dormer windows, and always the steeple of St. George's stood up plain, and the ridge of tall hills beyond the town. There was a ridge on the country side of the river, too, behind the farm. A hundred years later, in a cold December dawn, guns would thunder from the upper heights to be answered by guns from Marye's Heights, two armies beginning battle, one of them, on the northerly hills, in the name of a country not dreamed of by Mary Washington,—though created largely through her brain and brawn,—the other for a principle, as those fighters interpreted it, which is a part of the country's very foundation. But the woman herself, planting her spring garden above the river, back in the late 1750's, had no thought of future years; her business was more immediate. The northermost ridge made a fine wind-break for the farm in winter and the Spottysylvania hills diverted some of the thunderstorms in summer; that much she knew, and she set great store by the knowledge.

At the edge of the front yard the ground fell away in a steep cliff above a strip of green river flats, and beyond the flats flowed the river itself, coming down deep and swift from the mountains to the sea. Sloops and packets on their way to Falmouth port went by so close to the shore that Mary Washington, had she found the leisure, could have counted their crews from one of her upstairs windows. As her letter to Joseph Ball had stated, the captains, since there was no tobacco for them to take aboard, did not call at Ferry Farm; but on clear days they could be seen making into Fredericksburg wharf in the shadow of a great warehouse shaped like a cross. Hard by the wharf, as William Byrd had noted on the day that Henry Willis showed him the town, was a stone quarry; at that date, the year George Washington was born, the only stone building in the town was a large jail. For many years thereafter the high prison walls and the white quarry, a gleaming patch, must have been visible for miles. In the years that Mary Washington lived at the farm they made up a part of her daily outlook. The ferry landing, too, was in plain sight, where, in the first years, five small jubilant figures could be seen day after day from the north side, disembarking for a run uphill to school. The time for watching the ferry was past, now, but the old scow still brought up lively memories.

Thunderstorms have a way of following rivers, or so anyway peninsula people contend, and in those summertimes after her children had married and left, the dweller at the farm suffered much from her ancient enemy. The

thunderbolt at Pope's Creek still sounded in memory; even during the lightest summer storm she listened for it. In point of fact, she probably heard it through all talk of battle and bombardment. To a woman of her spirit this was a matter for shame. "But sometimes," she said once, driven to confession, "my fears are stronger than my faith." Nevertheless, in spite of recurrent thunder, and of hard work and some loneliness, the years between the first war and the outbreak of the next were full of content.

The winter after her eldest son's marriage was extraordinarily cold. On the sixteenth of January fine open fires crackled in the farmhouse, for the master of Mount Vernon spent the day there, and it was bitter weather. He writes in his diary of breakfasting at the farm, of going over to Fredericksburg at noon through a snowstorm, and of coming back across the river. "Return'd in the Evening to Mother's—all alone with her."

On a day in the following October England crowned a new king, George the Third. An almanac for that year carried opposite the date one brief sentence, "a high tide making." The prediction, as unconscious as it was significant, may have been read by Mary Washington, who was much given to poring over almanacs; but for her a tide meant to her only the wash of the Rappahannock below her yard. So far as the coronation in England was concerned, it mattered most to know what kind of lady the new queen might be. She

and all the other colonials accepted the new king without a qualm. That same year Joseph Ball of Stratford-by-Bow, formerly of Lancaster, Virginia, was gathered to his fathers. If he thought of the Northern Neck toward the last, he breathed peacefully and with pride.

Like all her race, Mrs. Washington was a devoted member of the Church of England. Though in her middle and later years she could not attend the services as faithfully as when she lived down on the Yeocomico, still, as a parishioner of Overwharton parish in Stafford, the county lying next to King George, she no doubt drove the long distance between church and home with some frequency. The rector, through most of her stay in that parish, was the Reverend John Moncure, a Scotch Huguenot. On Communion Sundays, up at old Acquia church, she took the sacrament from a paten and chalice of beaten silver, a gift to the church in memory of a former rector. That massive old service was to fare strangely as the history of Virginia unfolded; three times it was hastily buried in the ground for safe-keeping—in the Revolution, during the War of 1812, and in the War between the States.

St. George's church was much more convenient than Acquia to the Washington farm, and it is likely that Mrs. Washington went there oftener. There would be much less difficulty in crossing the river on the broad scow and being taken up the hill on the other side in Fielding Lewis's carriage than in making the long trip to Acquia church over Stafford's makeshift roads. The best proba-

bility is that on most Sundays she stayed at home and read the "Contemplations" of Sir Matthew Hale, with her own name inscribed on the flyleaf below that of her long-ago predecessor at Pope's Creek. On week days her schedule was full with managing the crops in their season, gardening, seeing to the care of livestock, and attending to all the other innumerable duties of a country home.

That year when she settled down for a season of tranquillity, Fredericksburg and its vicinity were gay enough in the wake of troublesome war, but there was little of social pleasure that would be likely to tempt her from the blessedness of her own fireside. Some of the county and town people took great pleasure in balls and races and showed a marked interest in lotteries, an old and favorite diversion. A few traveled away to Williamsburg for the joy of seeing the *Beggars' Opera* performed at the playhouse there—already quite a venerable playhouse, hoary with years and dignity. But the mistress of Ferry Farm, though no Puritan, would as soon have contemplated a trip to the moon as a trip to the Beggars' or any other opera.

She was indeed a Puritan where clothes were concerned. It is said that the style of her gowns was not known to change in thirty years, which means that when the Revolution broke out she may have been wearing the same cut of dress—the same dress, it is altogether likely—in which she drove down from Epsiwassen thirty-five years before. Her gown was nearly always

of lindsey-woolsey, the skirt rather short, the blouse a loose, shapeless sacque. A broad-brimmed straw hat tied beneath the square chin completed her costume. It seems, however, that the plainness of this attire did not diminish the respect in which she was held by the "simple folk" of the neighborhood. She might go as frumpily as her odd taste dictated, but to the country folk round about she was still Madam Washington, a model of dignity and poise in any garment, and the mother of a great Northern Necker.

Her well-known frugality as to clothes and social diversions is greatly at variance with the report that by nature and practice she was inclined to extravagance. The probability is that her extravagance took only one form—generous and sometimes unwise expenditures on the upkeep of her beloved place. Even in those simple days of low prices there was plenty of opportunity for sinking money in agricultural projects. And Mrs. Washington, who was nothing if not obstinate, may have had more faith in her ability as farmer than even her long experience with country life could justify. At any rate, it is known that as time went on her resources shrank to small dimensions. It was a matter that gave Washington himself no small concern.

In her indifference to fashions she was somewhat solitary, for most of her contemporaries held the subject in high esteem. Kingdoms may fall and republics rise, but women of any time and country must think with passion about what they wear. To be sure, there was

little attention paid to dress in Mrs. Washington's immediate family. Her granddaughter and namesake, Mary Lewis, was too young for such ideas, and Madam Betty Lewis, all of thirty, was too old to bother greatly about them except on big occasions. But the air was full of styles, the most extravagant ever known in history. Virginia women fortunately did not go so far as their London cousins, who had taken to every kind of absurdity, such as headdresses representing a ship in full sail or a coach and horses; but they, too, were all looking in their mirrors. Down in Westmoreland a few years later Mary Washington's granddaughter, Jenny of Bushfield, paid so much attention to her toilet that she found her way into the faithful diary of young Fithian, the Presbyterian divinity student who tutored at Nomini Hall. First noting what he called her agreeable proportions, he comments on her lack of forwardness, though she is "affable when spoken to, without pretending to be overcharged with wit," and moves "without any flirts and vulgar capers." Then her costume is described in detail: a chintz cotton gown with an elegant stamp, a sky-blue silk quilt and spotted apron, her hair "craped up" with two rolls at each side and topped by a small cap of gauze and lace with an artificial flower interwoven. There can be no doubt that her grandmother may have seen her in this array, and that when she did, she clamped her jaw.

The Presbyterian tutor was distinctly lenient with Jenny Washington, but his treatment of some of her

contemporaries is rather harsh and certainly unministerial. One of them has "damned ugly freckles on her face, though otherwise handsome and tolerable. . . . Miss Nancy Carter last night clipt off her eyebrows. . . . Miss Betsey Lee is a well-set maid, her aspect masculine and dauntless." He is extremely critical of one style which was distinctly none of his business: "I imputed the blush which was visible in her face to her being Swathed up Body and Soul and Limbs together." But he troubled himself in vain on that point, for stays continued high in favor long after his proper bones were dust.

Though Mary Washington cared more for a perfect setting of hen's eggs than for all the folderols in Christendom, the ladies of Fredericksburg leaned frankly to the folderols. In the Virginia *Gazette* for April 18, 1766, Catherine Rathall, milliner lately arrived from London, announces herself as temporarily located in the town with a tempting supply of feminine notions. On her list are lace caps and black-and-white gauze handkerchiefs, ready-made stomachers, catgut ribands for mourning, garnet and gold brooches, silver shoebuckles, and sundry other temptations too numerous, as the milliner herself admits, to mention. The advertisement ends suddenly and somewhat disconcertingly: "At the same place may be had the genuine Dr. Anderson's pills."

This flourish is not likely to have brought any custom from Ferry Farm. Much more to Mrs. Washington's liking was Roger Dixon's advertisement in the

same paper exactly a week later, offering for sale in Fredericksburg at reasonable credit broad and narrow hoes and axes, earthenware, nails, and other sensible stuff. She simply could not concentrate on shoebuckles and stomachers, nor had she any intention of being coerced in the matter. When some person of large temerity—the name has not come down to us along with the exploit—ventured to remonstrate with her on the subject of her clothes, she was forthright and final: "They suit me; that's enough."

Although her sons were all absent and scattered, few letters seem to have gone out from Ferry Farm in those quiet years. There was nothing in the state of the postal service, as yet, to encourage correspondence. Governor Spottswood, "sole deputy postmaster general of America," had wrought earnestly to establish some kind of satisfactory system. By April 1738 a letter mailed in Fredericksburg for Philadelphia on, say, a Wednesday, was taken across the Potomac that night and reached Annapolis two days later; on Saturday night, "at Susquehannah," it went into the hands of another rider, and in the course of perhaps a day or two more reached its destination. His plans could not have prospered greatly, however, for long after the Revolution a letter was ten days making the journey from Westmoreland to Philadelphia.

While Mary Washington was still living at the farm an advertisement appeared in the faithful *Gazette:* "Wanted immediately, a Rider to go from Hanover

town to Fredericksburg, by way of Todd's Bridge. Any person willing to undertake the same, who can produce certificates of honesty and sobriety, will give security for his true and faithful performance, will meet with encouragement by applying at the Post Office in Hanover Town, or the Post Office in Fredericksburg."

This shows commendable zeal on the part of the authorities. Nevertheless good riders would appear to have been at a premium, for there were constant irregularities and delays. One rueful item reads: "Fredericksburg, Va.—The Northern Mail which was due yesterday at one o'clock, is not yet received. The stage arrived at the usual hour, and the mail is supposed to be left at Dumfries, through the inattention of the driver."

Small wonder that now and then a letter-writer would scrawl desperately on the outside of the most casual missive: "Ride, Post, ride! For your life, Post, Haste!!!" It got the letter nowhere, but it gave us our word "post-haste,"and so after all proved not utterly footless.

It was lucky for Mrs. Washington that her daughter lived in hailing distance, otherwise she would never have been able to keep tabs on her supply of grandchildren. By 1766 eight or nine small Lewises had been born at Kenmore: Fielding, John Augustine, George Washington, and Mary had been joined at brief intervals by Charles, Samuel, Betty, and Lawrence. Robert and Howell were to come later. Several others died young—though not too young to have made their little places in the household.

Lawrence Lewis grew up and married the daughter of the incorrigible Jacky Custis, and had a son born at Mount Vernon. The infant's arrival was described by that lively young Mrs. Carrington who wrote an account of her visit to the Washingtons. In fact, the visit was interrupted by the event, Colonel Carrington dragging her away much against her will and against the protest of Washington himself, who promised to take the good gentleman riding all over the plantation if he would only remain. But the Colonel, though he had gladly followed his chief into bloody battle, fled before this crisis. His wife had him back in a week, however, and spent a happy time helping with Mary Washington's great-grandson.

Mary herself never saw this baby, but among so many descendants she would scarcely have missed him anyhow, even though he was great-nephew and step-grandson of the former President of the United States. She was a typical mother in Israel, but before she died the tribe had taken on such proportions that she wisely did not try to keep up with them. There were half a dozen step-grandchildren, but she took those calmly too. In 1768 Jacky Custis was giving his tutor, Boucher, endless anxiety in Caroline county by his indifference toward books and his craving for green cucumbers. Washington had to visit him, no doubt, and very probably stopped with his mother on the way back; but Mrs. Washington would refuse to be moved from her large calm by a step-grandson's well deserved stomachache.

She probably thought—and said—that it served him right, and that she knew of a certain unfailing cure ready to hand on any convenient tree.

Thirteen years is not any too long a lease of quiet happiness. At Ferry Farm the seasons moved round into place, each as full as it could hold of duties and responsibilities, but full, too, of the content that comes only after strife. With March the hills turned faintly green and the farm fields a rich brown. April brought new lambs to be cared for, and hens must be set then, and housecleaning done. By June the garden peas were gathered and the main crops planted. Thunderstorms began to come over the heights, about that time, and Mrs. Washington had to take to her feather bed when they did, though often they "followed the river" down to Westmoreland or Lancaster without a single flash over the farm. In August she made preserves and catsup. When autumn came with a fluttering of bobwhites and a slowing down of robin tunes, it was time to have the crops harvested: apples, pumpkins, and corn, and late vegetables from the garden.

It was autumn that she must have loved best on Ferry Farm, the season when she came into the world, the time when Virginia is nothing less than a short-cut to Heaven. As October wore on, captains came sailing by bound for Falmouth to take on tobacco, pushing past under her windows through gold and crimson water, where the deep Rappahannock reflected every oak and maple and brilliant ash along its brim. This was the

best time to look for company from the lower counties, for now the roads were passable and the sun not too warm; carriages turned in often at the farm gate and came rocking to the house between long reaches of russet fields.

A little later the year merged slowly into Indian summer, pure magic of weather, with a faint spice in the air, and the spire of St. George's turned to silver, pricking through an azure mist and bringing vaguely to mind, once in a while, the figure of a saint on horseback spearing a dragon in the name of England. Not long after would come the first snowstorm, shaken like a thin curtain across the river and hiding the town as it advanced. Thanksgiving Day always passed by unnoticed,—that was left to the Puritans,—but the big fireplaces were full of sputtering logs. Christmas dinner was probably an interchangeable feast, with the Lewises coming to Ferry Farm one year and Mrs. Washington going to Kenmore the next. Then—snow on the hills, and thaw, and sleet, with the river sometimes frozen from shore to shore; and after a while the winter rounded slowly to spring again.

For Mary Ball Washington there could not come too many years like that. To her way of thinking,—or at any rate of feeling,—this was life as life was intended to be. She had been born and bred to the country, to the lore of field and wood and farm and the wisdom of the weather. Down to her stern marrow she loved it all. She had brought children into the world and cared

for them to the best of her ability. The laborer is worthy of his hire, and for this laborer the best hire she could receive would be the opportunity to go on with her work, or with at least one branch of it. The children were safe, now. She would put her skill and strength into the care of other growing things.

She was too busy to notice, as the sixth decade of the century drew to its close, that the skyline was darkening again. For a long time clouds had been gathering more and more thickly, though no one except the politicians and the trained warriors had paid much attention to them. The owner of Mount Vernon looked thoughtful now and then, and so did Richard Henry Lee and a few other men north and south who kept a hand on the quickening pulse of America. Everyone kept hearing in snatches that there was dissatisfaction with the government, but for the most part Virginians paid small heed to rumors that at worst struck them only as rather odd.

Over beyond Fredericksburg Fielding Lewis went on quietly forging iron for purposes of peace; down in the Neck the masters of Sabine Hall and Wakefield, of Mt. Airy, Nomini Hall, Chantilly, and Stratford went on planting tobacco and hunting foxes, with hearty dinners rounding out each day and German flutes making the dusks melodious. It was the same way down on the York and the James. Up at Chatham, the Fitzhughs bred race horses indefatigably. Even Washington himself was heartily interested still in his thriving acres. He passed

through the lower counties once in a while on long rides and halted to take a meal with his mother, but whatever he thought of the political situation, she was the last person to whom he would have confided his thought. They talked of more tangible things.

Perhaps once in a while—he was not a soldier, and brave, for nothing—his remarks touched on the advisability of keeping down expenses, though it is not likely that they were well received. One topic that he was continually bringing up, he and Betty Lewis, too, interested even while it never failed to irk her. There was a house over in Fredericksburg that he had bought a year or two ago; it stood on the Kenmore land, roomy and comfortable. The brother and sister felt that their mother would be much better off in the cottage with friends and relatives close by than out on a lonely farm. But Mary Washington would have none of it. How much better off should they wish her to be than in the midst of her happy fields?

Mrs. Washington had long been hearing stray comments on the unsettled times, but her mind was not greatly occupied with them. Those were the days, indeed, when women were instructed to keep their minds set squarely on domestic affairs. And when they were born domestic, it was an easy enough dictum to obey. Mary Washington and her daughter reared twenty children before they were done. When first the air began to thicken with talk of taxes and tea, their chief concern remained, properly enough, the preparation of warm milk and

gruel. Let no one blame them. Granting that wars must be fought, some one undeniably has to attend to the business of producing the fighters. Before they can get into the field they must be got into the world and be cherished through their period of helplessness.

With the passage of the Stamp Act people began to prick up their ears, and also at news of the tirade of one Mr. Patrick Henry from nobody knew where, which had brought men to their feet in the House of Burgesses yelling treason even while they burned at his eloquence. That, however, was the year in which the second Betty Lewis was newly born, with the infant Samuel Lewis still in arms, and young Lawrence in the offing; Kenmore and Ferry Farm had all they could possibly manage.

As time went on, though, the rumors came faster than the babies. The House of Burgesses was making people give up almost every luxury; Spencer Ball had signed the measure imposing the restrictions, and Samuel Eskridge, and apparently every other gentleman of the Northern Neck. Richard Bland, Edmund Pendleton, Peyton Randolph, George Wythe, and other Virginians whose families Mary Washington knew well, were in a tumult. Even Richard Henry Lee, born and baptized with George Washington,—and almost as likely a baby, as she remembered—was doing and saying peculiar things.

She did not have to be psychic to forsee that whatever it was all about, her eldest son would soon be in the

COTTAGE IN FREDERICKSBURG WHERE MARY WASHINGTON LIVED

thick of it. He had been hard to keep up with since his retirement from public life, but at least she knew that all was well with him. From time to time reassuring word came through William Fitzhugh of his being at the Philadelphia and Annapolis horse races; on one occasion he attended a brilliant "Queen's Birthday Party," given by the Governor's wife; now and then on his way from Mount Vernon to Williamsburg he stopped in King George county. There was not much conversation, at these times, about taxes and other puzzling things; the two discoursed, rather, on farming problems. Still she must have enjoyed hearing from him, in 1769, an account of the appearance of Lord Botetourt, Governor-General, when he drove to a government assembly in a coach-and-six, with all the royal insignia. That coach had looked a little tarnished and slightly incongruous to the Burgesses, but for Mary Washington it signified the power and glory of England.

As time went on she was to hear less and less about coaches of honor and more and more about taxes. All through the year 1771 the country refused to drink tea. That, at least, must have been a revelation even to the most non-observant. Tea—hot, with cream and sugar, and served in delicate cups—was one of life's actual necessities in the mind of elderly ladies whose mothers in England had been born drinking it; for tea was at once the emblem of British domesticity and of the British Empire, since its use served as a daily reminder that Britain had mastered the Orient. Massachusetts,

New England, and Virginia—not to speak of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, and the Southern Colonies —went without the strong necessity now. It was probably by this token that Mary Washington and her women neighbors were brought to first realize that times were beginning to be strangely out of joint.

Nevertheless, they were not altogether prepared for an item in the *Gazette* of February 10, 1774, an extraordinary report of the doings of certain Bostonians who, disguised as Indians—of all things—had undertaken on a dark night to pitch quantities of tea over the side of a British vessel, and had carried out the undertaking with thoroughness. This was almost too much for a feminine mind of that day to grasp. There is a strong likelihood that when Mary Washington read the article she was guilty of an exasperated grunt. But by this time the more knowing had come to realize that something worse than eschewing tea was close at hand.

A few statesmen worried a good deal during the summer that followed the Boston Tea Party, and even lesser folk began to be severely uneasy. In Virginia the women, however, whether in manor or farmhouse, were probably at first only mildly disturbed, partly because their men explained nothing to them, and partly because they were too absorbed in taking care of the men to ask for explanations.

It was a strange year for weather, that year of 1774. The tutor at Nomini Hall made a lovely list of the spring's forward flowers and fruits—peas in March,

cowslips, violets, and English honeysuckle out early, and apricots, figs, and asparagus ripening before their time. He was to see only two more springs, being destined to die very soon, long before his own time, in the army. With May fell a heavy fruit frost over which he grieved. The summer temperature ranged queerly from hot to cold and back again; a bad drouth dried the land. On August 25 there was a wild hurricane from the northeast; it must have lashed the peaceful Rappahannock into choppy waves under the Ferry Farm bluff. Heat and drouth, frost and storm; but as always with early autumn September brought a period of relief; one quiet entry in the diary reads: "A pure, cold, northerly wind still blows."

The fruit frost was harder on the mistress of Ferry Farm than going without tea. She looked at her blackened peach and cherry blossoms with troubled eyes. Everyone had gone mad, talking about the misdoings of the king, but here was a calamity that she could understand. That was a terrible year for thunderstorms, too. They began in February; Mary Washington had never before had to hide her head at so outlandishly early a date. She did not know that another kind of storm, long gathering, was close at hand—a kind from which the thickest feather bed ever stuffed would offer no refuge

CHAPTER XIV

FREDERICKSBURG, on the high road between the State capital and the more northern towns, was a clearing-house for all the talk and speculation of Eastern Virginia, and that talk and speculation gathered steadily in volume as the spring of 1774 went by. Everybody was alert and listening now; even the state of the tobacco market dwindled to comparative insignificance.

It is not probable, though, that the widow over at the lonely farm caught enough of the excitement to feel any acute apprehension. A good deal of hearsay reached her, of course, but opinions conflicted and were hard to understand anyway, and she was very busy with problems of another sort. Fielding and Betty Lewis, recalling her anxiety in the former war, were probably in no haste to make the present situation clear, and she saw her eldest son very rarely now.

So the summer of 1774 drew on with every kind of rumor in the air. Then, with June, the restlessness crystallized to a strange solemnity; on the first day of that month there was fasting and prayer in all the churches

of the land. Now at length even the most uncomprehending began to see.

Over at Kenmore the Lewis babies had at last stopped coming, which was just as well, with the war at hand. The Washington sons, Samuel and John Augustine and Charles, continued to replenish the earth, but the nurseries in Westmoreland and upper Virginia failed to engage the grandmother's interest as the one at Kenmore had done, both because of their distance and because it was as true then as now that sons fall away a little with time but "a daughter's a daughter all her life." There had been changes in the family at Mount Vernon. Patsy Custis, Washington's delicate little stepdaughter, had died, and her brother was by this time married to Eleanor Calvert of Maryland. Down in the Neck there were many changes among the old families. The slow-moving post brought now and then a budget of items.

In that seething year of Seventy-four, despite all apprehension Virginia society still functioned. Once in the summer Colonel Washington and his lady passed through Fredericksburg on their way to Williamsburg to attend Lady Dunmore's latest ball; it was her last, by the way. Over at Chatham William Fitzhugh's stables were as fine as ever. His horse Kitty Fisher won the sweepstakes at Annapolis, that season, and a subscription purse at the Fredericksburg races, and wound up by beating Mann Page's Damon in an exciting contest. That same year Silverlegs, the great racer, made a name

for himself. There was to be harder work than purse-winning, shortly, for the colts of Kitty Fisher and Silverlegs.

As the summer passed with its oddly fluctuating weather the air crackled with no common kind of electricity. All up and down seaboard Virginia there was an unmistakable tenseness; groups gathered more and more thickly in manor halls and on street corners. From Massachusetts to South Carolina men were saying in no uncertain tones that England had gone too far at last.

Early September was marked by the meeting of the first Continental Congress in Philadelphia. Patrick Henry and Edmund Pendleton passed through Fredericksburg on their way to the northern city; Randolph, Harrison, and Bland had gone on before, and Richard Henry Lee was soon to follow. To the few who were still bemused these tidings had a strange ring. What was the meaning of this? Those who knew only too well what it meant were busy preparing for the trip north; those who guessed shook their heads and foregathered in clumps before the Indian Queen Hotel and the Rising Sun Tavern. George Washington was going, of course, the talkers said; he had lodged with Fielding Lewis the night before. Well, he was sure to be off at the first shot—and what could this congress in Philadelphia signify but the formation of a firing line?

Mrs. Washington knew that her son was heading for Philadelphia, and no doubt her heart misgave her. She, too, realized that he could be counted on to go with the

first shot and stay till after the last. And yet, after all, the doings in Pennsylvania might be only political powwow. So perhaps she was not gravely upset. Autumn was coming on with a great show of goldenrod and sumac along the crooked fence lines. She was deep in pickling and preserving. And sure enough, after a few weeks word came that her son was galloping over his plantations again. He had bought for her in Philadelphia a riding chair and a purple coat lined with shag, and, for all her scorn of finery, she was pleased.

With the passing of the next winter and the opening of the spring of '75, all fears and doubts and speculations sharpened to a certainty. In April came word of the battle of Lexington. Ten days after that, six hundred men gathered at the Rising Sun Tavern and signed a Declaration of Independence all their own. In the Great Room at Kenmore Fielding Lewis drew up a paper which has been called tantamount to a Declaration. This was three weeks before the Mecklenburg decision came into being. The tidings ran through Virginia from county to county—King William, Westmoreland, Gloucester, Kent, King George, all of them. The little royally named streets of Fredericksburg burned with excitement—Princess Anne, Caroline, Hanover, George. In a trice the flame had leaped the river to Ferry Farm. There was to be war with England, no more doubts; all up and down the American coast men were crowding to arms. And George Washington, gentleman, was in the field again.

In spite of all that had gone before it, the announcement of open war could not have found Mary Washington well prepared. She was still too unaware of far horizons, of signs and portents, too intently a part of her immediate surroundings. She received the news, when it came, with surprise; and promptly made her old resistance. What was Virginia thinking about? George the Third might have been guilty of a few mistakes, but he was the King of England, and England was the mother of the colonies; that was all there was to it. Yet Virginians were revolting against the king, with her own son leading the revolt. Nothing if not sincere, she said exactly what she thought, and said it boldly.

It is all very well for us, at this day and distance, to look smug and murmur about lack of patriotism. Mary Washington lived in a time when it was unwomanly for a woman to think of anything beyond the hearth. She had also been taught from the cradle that fealty to her sovereign was second only—perhaps not even second—to belief in God, and if the teaching had not actually included the Stuart doctrine, that idea was at least implicit in it. Throughout most of her life up to now, when she was not busy with hearth and children she was attending Church of England services and hearing the king prayed for with all fervor. A pioneer to the bone and marrow, she had had small chance, as yet, to become a patriot. Then, all at once,—for most of the war rumors had gone over her head like a flock of wild geese,—absorbed in the common things which she had been told

were her life's business, and had accepted as such, she hears that her king is a tyrant and that the colonies, led by her own son, are mustering to overthrow his power. It is easy to understand her consternation if only we will stop looking at her through the wrong end of the telescope, viewing her as a far-off, prim creation of our own instead of examining her at close hand in the light of reality. She was good timber for the Republic, but timber must be hewn and sawn and dressed and put through innumerable hard processes before it can be used.

When all is said, though, there is little doubt that she was far less alarmed by rebellion against the king than by another aspect of the matter—what these violent proceedings would mean to homes and families. She was plunged, indeed, into a rebellion of her own—a strong protest against that which threatened the security of the hearth and the safety of the young. Those were the two main articles of her faith, and now she rose to defend them.

In the midst of her perplexity and alarm Washington himself, on the eve of setting out for Boston to take command as the head of the army, came down across the creeks. There was little time to spare, but he must see to his mother's safety before it was too late. It is proof of the intensity of her feeling and of his realization of it that on reaching the Rappahannock he crossed to Fredericksburg instead of turning down the northern shore. Over in the town he took lodging at an inn and

sent a message to Ferry Farm. Nothing could have been more significant in a Virginian than this halting in sight of his own home with its hitherto eager hospitality. In fact, it proved too much for his mother herself; for a son of hers to be putting up at a tavern a stone's throw away was worse than any rebellion. The servants had been afraid to deliver Washington's message, but she somehow got wind of it and sent for him instantly.

He came. It must have been the hardest of all the hard hours that they had gone through together. There was only one possible outcome. For once more she was brought up short against that inevitable and inexorable paradox that ruled all her relations with this first-born son,—so like her in so many ways,—the fact that in fighting him she fought her own strength. It was an ancient struggle.

The interview was made all the more difficult by his having to break a strange piece of news to her. News, news, there was so much of it now, and all so hard to bear! It was imperative, he said, that she should leave Ferry Farm and move into the Fredericksburg cottage that had long been waiting for her. War had come, and she must no longer remain on the lonely farm, cut off by the river from ready aid.

She resisted with all her strength. The idea that there could be any chance of danger on the home place struck her as foolish in the extreme. What was to be feared? Even granting that the king's soldiers might come, they

were not French or Indians, to harm an old woman. So her angry argument must have run. But underneath the lindsey-woolsey sacque her heart was in a panic. Leave Ferry Farm, where she had lived for thirty-seven busy, contented years, where her husband had died, and her little daughter, where she knew the very thickets by heart? She had taken hold there by every root and tendril; he should not make her go.

But in the end she made herself go. He could not have taken her away by physical force; it would never have come to that, as she well knew. But she went. When we remember the mother of Washington in the Revolution we must not forget this. Nor must we forget the exile from Ferry Farm; it never ended. In whatever spirit their hour closed that troubled summer day with thunder in the air, it closed with her defeat. She saw at last that her strange son was fired by some purpose which he would carry out or die. Seeing that, she finally surrendered—the first casualty of the Revolution in Virginia. In so far as she herself realized, the sacrifice was made for George Washington, but subconsciously she made it for his cause—just as, unaware and obeying by blind instinct the laws of her nature, she had made him to begin with out of stuff that had been in the weaving a thousand years.

So Washington rode north with all speed, and his brothers and nephews and cousins began to enlist in the new army. Fielding Lewis turned to making guns in his iron factory. And over across the river Mary Washing-

ton got herself ready in lonely fashion for the difficult business of changing homes.

The feather beds and the tall clock were stowed into a wagon, the kitchen furniture brought by Mary Johnson from England to Epping Forest, and the rest of the household belongings. The colored servants helped her pack up—black Stephen and his wife, two youths, a girl named Little Bet—with tears and lamentations, after the custom of their race when confronted by change. The last few hours were spent, it is probable, in cutting slips from rose-bushes and fruit trees to transplant across the river; as much of the place as could be pried up should be carried away.

There is a pain in moving out of an old home, bag and baggage, that stands all by itself in the catalogue of human agonies, a pain that this woman, of all people, must have felt to her inmost being. In some mysterious way the bare house takes on a kind of personality, full of wordless reproach; the move becomes nothing less than stripping a faithful comrade and leaving him beside the road. The long-time occupant of Ferry Farm knew every pang of all this before her transfer was finally made. No doubt she kept her chin firm. It was never her practise to go down before the first blow of fate; but when the battle had turned against her she stayed strong.

The new home was comfortable enough, a substantial house of one story and an attic, set in four acres of land with its front on Charles Street and its rear yard

BEDROOM IN THE FREDERICKSBURG COTTAGE IN WHICH WASHINGTON TOLD HIS MOTHER FAREWELL, AND IN WHICH SHE DIED

touching the premises of Fielding Lewis. There were four rooms in the cottage itself, and out at the back were a comfortable kitchen and quarters for the servants. George Washington had taken great pains with that back yard. He knew his mother's tastes well, because they were his too, and so with his own hands he had set out fruit trees and planted a double border of box hedge along the brick walk that led to Kenmore. Thirteen horse-chestnut trees he had planted in the yard, too, and named them for the thirteen colonies. There were flowers and grape vines. The room at the right as one entered the house was the parlor, seldom used; that opposite was the "chamber" where the best of the belongings were put, including the deep mattress filled with hen feathers from the loft at Epping Forest—old, comforting feathers, plucked from colonial fowls more than a century and a half before.

After the furniture had been put into place that first day and the big clock set ticking again, the new occupant probably stood for a long time at the front window staring out. New occupants usually do. There was no sign of the river, it lay too far below, and she had only a glimpse of green fields. The course of her existence, which had traveled in slow curves so far, had now taken a sharp right-angle turn. Life on the farm was over; and she had no idea what life off a farm might be. But it is doubtful whether she thought only of that as she stood at the unfamiliar window with its circumscribed view. These were strange times that had now fallen, and she

realized that there was more than her own disordered life to think about.

The first task to tackle was that of becoming accustomed to existence in a town. In that year Fredericksburg, so far as population went, was not much of a place. Captain Smith, on his first visit to the locality, had found three Indian villages there. As he pushed up the river the misguided "Rapahanocks" had welcomed him with song and dance; but when, seventy years later on, a hundred Gloucester men were manning "a ffort at the Ffals of the River," equipped with "ffourteen hundred and eighty pounds of powder and ffourteen hundred and fforty pounds of shot," the only singing to be heard was the tune of arrows cleaving toward the fort. A hundred years later still, the whole region was in the possession of white men, but even at that date the town was small.

When Byrd of Westover paid his visit in 1732, Fredericksburg had been an incorporated town for only a short time. It was in a flourishing condition, however, with a large wharf, a public warehouse, an ordinary, or inn, and other buildings for carrying on business. Byrd noted, though, that he was able to find only one tavern keeper, one merchant, one tailor, and one smith. The scarcity of taverns, however, was partly atoned for by the activities of a versatile Mrs. Livingstone, who was coffee-house keeper and also a doctor of sorts. She and the other physician no doubt wisely delegated teeth-pulling to the lone and lusty smith.

Forty years afterward, when George Washington chose the Charles Street house for his mother's dwelling, the place had grown into marked importance. Trade was brisk, and the public fairs that had been provided for before Colonel Willis's time were held on a larger scale than ever. There was a capacious Market House, or Town Hall, where coffee drinkings, municipal meetings, and general gatherings were held. The town occupied an important point on the main highway through Eastern Virginia. A single ordinary could no longer suffice to serve the tide of travel between the northern cities and the southern peninsulas. The Rising Sun Tavern and the Indian Queen Hotel had risen to meet the need.

In those two inns—the Rising Sun still occupies its corner in Fredericksburg—burgesses on their way to and from Williamsburg and business men traveling between Alexandria and Richmond or Norfolk stopped for lodgings; and more than one smith was on hand to attend to their worn horses. There was much civic pride. It is on reliable record that in those flourishing days a certain Fredericksburger returning from a visit to New York—then a straggling hamlet—wrote back courteously in his bread-and-butter letter, "I hope some day New York will be as thriving and prosperous as Fredericksburg."

The Virginia town throve and prospered sufficiently in the summer of 1775 to suit the tastes of its newest resident, who did not care greatly for progress where progress involved change. Her heart was far from wharves

and taverns; not very far, after all, only a coin's toss across a little river, but at least out of the town. One old sandy road washed into gullies by the rain meant more to her than all those proper little streets.

Yet her lot might have been much worse, as she must have realized at the bottom of that practical heart. Not only was Kenmore close at hand, with the Willises and the Thorntons (all the Willis girls had married Thornton brothers) not much farther away, but there were many other worth-while neighbors right at her elbow. Dr. Mortimer, her genial friend and physician to the last was nearby; he owned, in fact, half the town. In other large houses were the Weedons, the Poseys, the Woodfords, the Mercers, the Wallaces—five families that later sent five generals to fight under her son and others. The apothecary shop at the nearest corner belonged to Hugh Mercer, he who had rallied the six hundred before the Rising Sun Tavern. Mercer had known George Washington under Braddock in the other war, and loved him, and later had settled in Fredericksburg for the avowed purpose of being near him. He promised himself to be a good friend to Washington's mother. On still another corner lived one William Paul, a tailor, with his younger brother John. They were natives of Scotland. It was this John who, sallying forth a few years later with an extra surname, flung to the breezes under the astonished nose of George III the first American flag ever run up at sea.

The rector of the Episcopal church was the Reverend

James Marye, son of that Parson Marye who had been a teacher of George Washington's in the early Ferry Farm days. St. George's was much nearer the Charles Street dwelling than the Overwharton church had been to the farmhouse, and so Mrs. Washington could attend services with more regularity in her new situation. There at St. George's she saw, as at her own cottage too, numerous Westmoreland and Lancaster kin, stopping over in Fredericksburg on their way to northern and southern points. Her shifting lines had fallen to her in a pleasant place—if only she could forget one that was even pleasanter.

But all her life she had thought in the measurements of broad fields and open sky, and it was hard to accommodate herself to the limits of even a little town. She must have felt, in the new quarters, like a busy, wide-faring bee caught and shut into a box. In time, naturally, the trim little acres would grow into something more than the setting for a doll's house; at first, though, the readjustment came slowly. The sundial out in the back yard measured off many a bored and weary hour of the strange new existence.

Mrs. Washington would be well waited on, almost too well. But the occupation that she loved, overseeing the work of her place, was badly circumscribed here, since there was little work to be overseen. No more crops, no more sheep-shearing or raising of fowls. She could give out meals to be cooked, and train grapevines, and clip the box hedge; that much she could do, and

probably did. But probably, also, she saw from the very outset in the new home that her principal interests would have to be the book of contemplations and the brick walk leading to Kenmore. Knitting would provide another occupation; she was a great knitter, and already there was talk of the great number of socks that must be sent to the soldiers.

All through her first summer of exile she drove over to the farm every few days, even after autumn began, though that may not have proved easy, for if anything could have increased her loneliness it must have been the sight of those beloved old frowsy fields at harvest time. Unstirred by war and tumult, all the wide fields were shining with peace. There was no sign of a redcoat, either; they had taken her away for nothing.

The first winter of the war went by rather drably than otherwise. From time to time news came of developments in the North—by postriders, by messengers, and in various other ways. General Washington's letters to his mother came in slowly indeed, brought by relays over the five-hundred mile route—laconic letters, beginning "Honored Madam" and telling little beyond the fact that he was well, after all the main thing that she wanted to know. The new mistress of the cottage had many callers and now and then went down the street herself, borne by her negro boys in the riding-chair that came from Philadelphia and wearing the purple coat lined with shag. In midwinter the younger Madam Washington in coach and four, with colored postillions gayly attired, drove from Virginia to Massa-

chusetts to visit the head of the army, then in camp at Cambridge. Fredericksburg heard of that journey, in due course, and for one of its residents it made a bright spot in the general grayness. She knew well the look of the Mount Vernon equipage, and how proudly it rolled. Perhaps it rolled a bit too proudly to suit her simple taste, but at any rate she liked to think of home's going to her son since apparently he must be forever leaving it.

All winter long the little town hummed with war talk. The price of tobacco fluctuated, and housewives began to be more careful with their stores. The conversations on tavern porches and in front of shops waxed more animated with each week. Some few of the conversationalists were none too well pleased with George Washington's activities, nor indeed with any aspect of the movement; one spot in the heart of the town even won the name of Tory corner. But for the most part the corners were highly patriotic.

From every fireside young men were striding off to join the army—Fitzhughs, Grymeses, Willises, Thorntons, Maryes—no end to them. Young Fielding and George Washington Lewis were early up and away. Betty Lewis—she had so many boys—must have felt that before long she might have to be counting heads as her mother had counted in the old, safe days of the ferry trips to school. Mary Washington's other grandsons and younger sons, nephews, and cousins—their name was more than legion—were all arraying themselves in buff and blue.

The business of the two women had radically changed: Done, now, with the task of bringing men into the world, they could only sit and watch, with the possibility of having to see them out of it. But at least they had each other. Whatever tidings might burst at any moment in the midst of the town, the box-bordered walk would remain, and one of them could go to the other, whichever was needed more.

That strange winter went by, as war winters somehow go, and with March Virginia heard that the British had evacuated Boston. There is no way of knowing just how that message echoed in the cottage on Charles Street. If the word had been that the French had evacuated Boston, or even the Indians, it might have had a believable —even though peculiar—sound; but the British! Boston was a part of the colonies, and the colonies were a part of England; the frank joy up and down Hanover Street must have had a slightly incongruous ring.

Yet it may well be that by this time the matter was becoming clearer to Mary Washington and that at length, even though somewhat tardily, she was beginning to unlearn the lessons of a lifetime. The process of unlearning would prove longer for her than it had proved for her sons and grandsons, off at the first bugle note, for the good reason that she had been far longer at the learning. In fact she had been too hard at her woman's job, and for too many years, to comprehend with any great promptness or alacrity the big change that had shaken her universe.

Now, however, tucked away in the compact little cottage, it is likely that the riddle began to seem less hard. She had been well schooled in the ancient tradition of her house, loyalty to kings; but after all, neither she in her unconscious way nor her ancestors in their more vocal fashion had ever intended to give unqualified allegiance to any sovereign. The sovereign, they felt at the bottom of their hearts, existed for the public good, and when he ceased to forward the public good he automatically ceased to have any claim upon their allegiance. Mary Washington's problem was to understand how George the Third and his policies had failed. And in the course of that dreary winter she had plenty of opportunity to work out the problem over her plying needles.

There is nothing strange in her struggle, just as there is nothing to disturb us in the probability that at this time, to a certain degree anyway, she was very much what local legend has made her out and popular opinion refused to accept her as being,—a strong-willed, high-spirited old lady, square of jaw and somewhat difficult in disposition, with perhaps as many faults as merits,—wherein she markedly resembles the rest of humanity. It cannot be denied that more than once she tried hard to divert her son from his high destiny (having no earthly way of knowing what that destiny might be); and it is also true that at the outbreak of the Revolution she did not spring forth instantly as a full-fledged patriot. But this need not embarrass posterity.

The trouble is, we are incurable sentimentalists. We insist on making over historical characters to suit our preconceived notions of what they should be, chipping, sandpapering, and polishing each personality until it assumes what we consider the proper contour and color. That kind of thing is what has happened to the mother of Washington. The original shape is nothing to be ashamed of. Poured back into her first mold, she emerges a creditable figure, well qualified to stand on her own feet and needing no apologist.

So the present generation can regard her with tolerance as she sits in her new, cramped quarters that first year of the war waiting letters from her firstborn and knitting socks for his soldiers. When he went out there had been no fine talk from her about coming back with his shield or on it, mainly because, true to her training, she had always conceived of a shield as being shaped like a ploughshare. Yet here she sits now, doing her crude part. And meanwhile, hundreds of miles away, the identical force and will-power and decision of purpose that had won her the reputation of hardness was getting ready, in another form, for the crossing of the Delaware and the winter at Valley Forge.

CHAPTER XV

Not long after the withdrawal from Boston came news that Washington was riding again, this time southward, to New York. Old military men in Fredericksburg may have explained to his mother the probable meaning of this—that the commander-in-chief had guessed what would soon be happening around New York. His letters said little, as usual. In this year, for many weeks, the box walk between the cottage and Kenmore was trodden very often, because for a while Mary Washington and her daughter were absorbed in a lonely task having nothing to do with battlefields and far from unfamiliar to either of them. Samuel Lewis, aged thirteen and only playing at soldier as yet, was stricken with illness and soon died. The little boy's brothers and uncles were far away, and for a long time, since war is no respecter of private griefs, they did not even know that he had gone. After the forlorn funeral his mother and grandmother took up their lives again, and his father went grimly on making guns.

That was a sickly summer. Landon Carter of Sabine Hall complains in his diary more than once of "bilious

inflammatorys" during the hot months. Food was not too plentiful, and people boiled river water to get salt.

As the autumn came to its peak, the second autumn of the war, there was fighting around the little town of Richmond, with Hugh Mercer leading the Virginians; and a little later news came of the battle of White Plains. In November the British captured Fort Washington. There was small cheer in any of this for heavy hearts. Perhaps during harvest Mrs. Washington went across to Ferry Farm oftener than she had to. Another gloomy winter was at hand; she wanted to carry over into it the look of corn shocks standing in the old fields and the sound of crickets playing piccolos down in the frosty brown grass. Sometimes when she delayed going the call of bobwhites carried clear and sweet across the narrow water and drew her back, all willingness to go, yet almost too weary for the going.

A merciful two hundred miles lay between Fredericksburg and the vicinity of Philadelphia, and so when Christmas fell that year, with its somewhat scant celebration for the youngest of the Lewises, no one had heard of the terrible transit of the Delaware—not then or for many weeks later did they hear. The story of the battle of Trenton worked its way down before the details of that magnificent crossing could be told—if they ever were in their entirety.

Then, a little after New Year's, the battle of Princeton took place, and with it the war came poignantly home to Fredericksburg, for in that battle died Hugh Mercer,

doctor and general and one-time contender for Bonnie Prince Charlie on Culloden field. The slow dispatches reported that he fell leading a fearless charge and drew his last breath in the arms of young George Lewis. Mary Washington had lost a warm friend.

The year 1777, giving the lie to its lucky numbering, brought a period of greater anxiety than ever, because it was a period of sickening suspense. No one, civilian or soldier, knew what might happen any day. The British were shifting the scene of their activities, and shifting by sea. The leader of the American armies, entirely in the dark, could only wait for developments, watching like an eagle. All sorts of garbled rumors must have made their way to the Rappahannock—the gossip of eager patriots, made up sometimes out of the whole cloth of their sanguine hopes, along with deliberately false reports put out by Tories—on their part, of course, every whit as eager. Spring passed, and summer, with numerous dispatch riders galloping in on the way to Williamsburg from the north, but few bearing any news that has gone into history. Though there were many fresh graves and broken hearts that season, there were no big battles.

In October Burgoyne's surrender, while eminently significant to military men, did not indicate to other watchers anything of great moment. In army circles it sent George Washington's reputation up with a bound, for the victory at Saratoga was in every sense the outcome of his genius; but his mother, for one, was not well

able to follow military tactics, and she must have harkened a little wearily to word of another great battle. The war was in its third year, now; she hoped the American forces would win, but they seemed very slow about it.

The Lewises begged her to come and make her home with them, but she would not hear of it. "I thank you for your affectionate and dutiful offers," was her invariable reply, "but my wants are few in this world, and I feel perfectly competent to take care of myself." Still, for all those brave words, one of the rooms at Kenmore bears down to this day the name that the negro servants gave it in the Revolution years, "Old Mrs. Ma'y Washin'ton's room."

For those who know the long-ago colored servant, that name paints a whole picture: the stir of the household staff when "Marse George Washin'ton's mother" took it into her head to spend the night next door; the hurry to make the great bed afresh, to dust the mahogany bureau and set the candles in place; how they would see her coming, a little stiffly, between the box borders, and station themselves at the front door, rather awed, like Lawrence of Choptank, to usher her in with bows and scrapes.

That special room must have seen many conferences between mother and daughter lasting until near to many a dawn. Both had sons at the front; there were nights when even half an acre between them would have been too much. So the older woman, growing feebler now, whether she would own it or not, would come to the

CORNER OF "OL' MRS. MA'Y WASHIN'TON'S ROOM" AT KENMORE

younger, and they kept their watch together. The very fact that Mrs. Washington was willing to spend a night away from her own house—it was not the custom of elderly people in those days—is proof of her loneliness.

Yet she bore up with determination. Through unceasing anxiety, through exile, through separation from the oldest interests of her heart, she went on dauntlessly. The iron in her and the gold seemed to fuse, in those difficult days, into a composition that made her able to endure. Not once during the war would she give up the management of her own affairs. George Washington Parke Custis, her son's step-grandson, has incorporated into his book of recollections a small but vivid portrait of the mother of the chief. He makes it plain that she proved herself well able to stand up against misfortune, —and misfortune, in those long six years, was proving no mean adversary for a lone woman of seventy. The thought of going under by so much as an inch was not to be tolerated. So she kept on her indomitable feet, "carrying her own keys," says Custis, "bustling in her household affairs, providing for her own wants, and living and moving in all the pride of independence."

In his own day, he goes on to say, many Fredericksburg people could still recall the sight of her old phaeton, driven carefully by black Stephen and carrying her to Ferry Farm on a tour of inspection. There her keen farmer's instinct was a faculty to be reckoned with, as a certain overseer found to his discomfort. On one occasion, it is told, she discovered that a favorite scheme of

hers had gone awry. The agent—it is a wonder so bold a fellow was not on the firing line—undertook to explain that after all, in his judgment, the job had turned out more successfully than it would have turned out under the first plan. Having dared almost as much as any soldier at the front, he got the doubtful reward of his valor. The owner of the farm drew herself to her full offended height.

"And pray," said she, "who gave you any exercise of judgment in the matter? I command you; there is nothing left for you but to obey."

The unfortunate man confided afterward to a sympathizer that when he caught the "blue lightening" of the old lady's eyes he felt exactly as if he had been knocked down.

Her sight began to fail, and Fielding Lewis, noting this, and also her frequent use of a cane, offered gently to take charge of her affairs. But that would have been unbearable—to have the farm run under any direction but her own, to put the crops at the mercy of a man's discretion, even though that man be her own trusty son-in-law. Still, the fields looked dimmer, now, than they used to look, she had to acknowledge that; her eyes were so poor that almost any mistake of the shiftless overseer's might go undetected. After a while hard common sense got the better, slightly, of inclinations. "Do you, Fielding, keep my books in order . . . but leave the executive management to me." And Lewis, wise beyond his generation, said no more.

The winter of 1777-78 was the winter of Valley Forge. If there is any basis for such an idea as a mother's having supernormal knowledge of what may befall her eldest son, then one of the chief mercies of Mary Washington's makeup was its freedom from the slightest trace of a leaning toward the metaphysical. That sort of thing ran off her practical mind like water off a duck's back. She must have known, however, from news reports and general talk and a little from between the lines of Washington's brief letters that things had reached a terrible pitch in the North. If the whole knowledge had been available her stoicism would have weakened, no doubt, as would many another woman's.

When the winter's last snowdrifts were slipping down the river-bank news came that General Howe had evacuated Philadelphia. The phrase "evacuation by the British" did not ring so strangely, now, in Mrs. Washington's ears. With the rest of Virginia she rejoiced whole-heartedly over the brightening prospects of the American army.

Then ensued a long period marked by few battles but heavy with suspense. With the autumn came eventful weeks for Fredericksburg. The commander-in-chief had his headquarters in the place for nearly a month, and his mother and sister saw more of him than they had seen for years. But with the wearing by of October he was gone again.

As the long struggle swung gradually toward success and riders bearing news of significant victories came

galloping in from time to time, Fredericksburg used to wonder no little at old Madam Washington. It was plain that she rejoiced over the glad tidings, yet she rejoiced strictly after her own fashion. They did not realize that this attitude was entirely characteristic of her nature. Once having seen and accepted the righteousness of the cause in hand, she took each favorable development as a matter of course. When word of the victory at Trenton was brought to the cottage she remarked that George seemed to be deserving well of his country. And when several solid citizens determined that they would read to her, whether or no, extracts from enthusiastic letters regarding the General, and proceeded to do so, she remained unmoved.

"Gentlemen," came her comment, "here is too much flattery." Then she added provokingly, "But he will not forget the lessons that I have taught him."

She had reference to her long counsellings on the dangers of pride, but her remark made the citizens a little huffy. Here, surely, was cause enough for pride! On second thought, however, they decided that Washington's mother was as puffed up, down in her chest, as anybody, though she had a queer way of showing it. And mothers of heroes, they felt, must be allowed their own ways. No doubt the mother of Moses gave herself many aloof airs during the exodus.

Still, they never seemed to learn any sense about carrying her the news as it came in. On a certain day late in the war, loungers before the Rising Sun tavern were

shaken by the sudden appearance of a spent horseman, booted and spurred and bearing every mark of authority, who drew rein to ask breathlessly the way to Madam Washington's house. Casting discretion to the winds, the crowd surged after him. The mistress of the little house, so some one reported afterward and someone else recorded, was in her back yard tying up grapevines when the messenger and the mob arrived. She was utterly adequate to the occasion. Taking the important-looking packet that was handed her, she thrust it into the large pocket of her voluminous skirt—a lindsey-woolsey skirt, it is to be supposed, though that is not remembered.

"Madam," gasped one of the crowd, incredulous, "there may have been a battle."

"Very well," was Madam Washington's reply.

Then, turning to the business of the moment, she served the impromptu company with the best refreshments that her wartime larder would yield. They went away full of seedcakes and blackberry cordial, but void of information. After all, they were proud of her; she was exasperating, but she was magnificent.

In spite of all her courage, however, as the months of the war dragged by and all the normal processes of living grew daily more slow and cramped—transportation difficult; food high; worst of all, labor lacking for the farm—she appears to have fallen now and then into deep dejection. At one of those times she wrote a letter to her third son, John Augustine Washington of Westmoreland, one of her rare, laborious letters. All her life

she had disliked to wield the pen, and now her pen was very rusty, almost as rusty as her never too good spelling. The communication to "Dear Johnne" must have been the product of a kind of temporary despair. But there is more of her real self in this letter than in any other that has been saved for us.

I am glad to hear you and all the family is well, and should be glad if I could write you the same. I am a going fast, and it the time is hard. I am borrowing a little Corrn, no Corrn in the Corrn house. I never lived so poore in my life. Was it not for Mr. French and your sister Lewis I should be almost starved, but I am like an old almanack quite out of date. Give my love to Mrs. Washington all the family. I am, dear Johnne, your loving and affectionate Mother.

So many tides had ebbed and flowed for her, so many stars had gone down, and now a long storm had set in, a storm that showed no signs of abating! She was weary, too, and often in pain. It was not so easy as formerly to take the trip over the river. But some days the man-made trimness of the little town cottage tried her spirit, and she must get away from it—to somewhere out into the open, preferably to Ferry Farm, if she could manage to go that far, but somewhere, anyway.

Out on the boundary of the Kenmore property there was a large boulder,—it is still there, and the townspeople call it Meditation Rock,—a natural outcropping of stone, very unusual for that sandy soil. It juts out over the edge of a kind of bluff that drops away precipitously to a great sweep of country fifty miles in extent. As the years grew

harder she had the habit of going out to the big rock on sunny days and sitting for many hours alone, staring across the river. The bluff is so high and the plain below so far flung that the seat is a kind of perch on the rim of the world. Musing there through long, silent afternoons could never put corn into an empty cornhouse, but it provided another and a better kind of sustenance, and Mary Washington knew that it did, and was always hobbling out on her gold-headed cane, to sit in the sun and look down into blue distance.

So the year 1780 passed, and still the colonials marched and countermarched, and still word came from this point and that of the movements of the British and of the Continental forces, of the whereabouts of General Washington and his sudden departures into other whereabouts. Letters moved with fair regularity between the cottage on Charles Street and the army headquarters in New York State and New Jersey. Young George Lewis and his brother came back to Kenmore as they had leave, and other sons of the Northern Neck to their various homes, and the foundry outside the town went on day after day turning out guns.

In spite of failing eyesight and sometimes failing spirits there were still occasional trips to the home farm. The phaeton grew more rickety, black Stephen more feeble, and the old horse—he may have been, who knows, a lineal descendant of Samuel Bonhum's dapple gray—plainly slabsided for lack of corn; but still the trio must go. The farm had to be managed and only one

person could do the managing. Besides, that person hungered after the familiar place. For one thing, the spring in the hollow yielded water that, as she could have told King David, was sweeter even than the water from Bethlehem's well.

So, many a morning, the old vehicle rocked down the hill to the scow and up the hill on the other side. And before it turned homeward the jug had been refilled, the farm agent set securely back into his place, and Mrs. Washington had taken a fresh hold on her troublous life. For her nature was of the passionately loyal type that must return again and again to ancient sources or perish. The feel of the worn doorsill under her foot, the scent of the frowsy autumn pastures, the taste of the pure, cold water—in spite of any calamity she would have them as long as she could.

All through the first year of the 1780's Virginia was made uneasy by the enemy's activities in South Carolina. Fredericksburg heard much of them. After the capture there of General Lincoln, Gates, on his way to the troubled region, passed through the town, and when, later on, Greene was ordered down to relieve him, he too stopped there. Nevertheless, for all this coming and going of generals, and for all the activity in the South, by far the worst of the war was over, now, if any one could have known it. But no one did. Virginians were far more disturbed than at any time since it began. The alarm grew acute when, in the following year, General Cornwallis, preceded by his harrying hornet, the raider

Tarleton, pushed up through North Carolina and settled himself in temporary abode—it proved to be even more temporary than he had planned—on the bank of the York River.

Tarleton and his Black Dragoons were everywhere after that, raiding, burning, and doing all kinds of lesser mischief. It is to be feared that practise made perfect, and that after a while the clever rascal took a kind of wanton delight in his depredations. Sometimes he even descended to petty larceny. On one occasion, it has been told down the generations, though with less and less rancor as the tale grew older, he and his company descended on a farm and gleefully despoiled the henyard. As they rode away the angry housewife discovered an alarmed old drake in hiding. Grabbing up the ancient coward in all his weakness she sent a little negro scuttling after the marauders. "Here is something that you overlooked," her scornful message to Tarleton ran. And the graceless raider, not to be abashed, rode off with ribald laughter, the old fowl squawking to heaven at his saddlebow.

A more serious matter was his well-nigh successful attempt, one sweltering night in June, to capture Governor Jefferson and the Virginia legislature, sitting at Charlottesville for safety, with Patrick Henry, Richard Henry Lee, Benjamin Harrison, Thomas Nelson, and other statesmen in attendance. But for the quickness of a youngster named Jouett they would all have shared the fate of the old drake. Jouett rode without changing

horses forty miles—from Louisa County to Albermarle and straight up steep Monticello hill—in six hours and a half, outgalloping Tarleton by five minutes and barely saving the Governor's neck. These tales about Tarleton and even more the menacing nearness of Cornwallis were not to be taken lightly. Civilian Virginia was keenly troubled.

It must have given Mrs. Washington a shock of indignation to hear that her native State was suffering enemy invasion. Nor was this indignation unmixed with acute resentment of the fact that any fine day Tarleton's rogues might dash away from Ferry Farm with her own cherished creatures dangling at their scarlet coat tails.

While she watched and wondered her son came southward, hot-foot for Yorktown to attend to General Cornwallis. It looked as if the whole of Virginia might become a battlefield. Men began to cast around for places to which they might send their families. In early summer there seemed every prospect that Tarleton would be in Fredericksburg, and those women and children who were able to leave the town did so. Mrs. Washington did not want to go. Once more, as often in the past, she held out stubbornly against the persuasions of her son; but once more, also, he prevailed. Suddenly she found herself about to start on a journey the like of which she had never taken before. Washington had decided to send her up to his estate in Frederick county, nearly a hundred miles away. She would be out of danger, there. That she would also be out of touch with

nearly all her interests and associations, was not the kind of thing that could be taken into consideration when enemy raiders were on the rampage.

Frederick county occupied the peak of the Northern Neck. It marked the northwestern tip of that long, river-edged region that had been the possession of Lord Culpeper and had later gone to his son-in-law, Thomas, Lord Fairfax, the nobleman who had cared heartily for young George Washington and tried to get him into the Royal Navy. He had continued to care for him, by the way, though his love was sorely tried by the fellow's activities in the Revolution. Hannah Fairfax, the daughter of William of Belvoir, lived in Frederick, the wife now of Augustine Washington's nephew, Warner Washington. And many other coast Virginians lived there, too,—Peytons, Burwells, Nelsons, Pages, Lees—representatives of families who, following the trail blazed by Spottswood, had pushed westward beyond the Blue Ridge. It may have been to the Warner Washington home that Mrs. Washington went, for she and Hannah Fairfax must have known each other well in the old days at Epsiwassen. At any rate, she went to friends, well out of reach of the long arm of the war. There is little doubt that she would have been willing to risk any danger to have stayed at home, but she was obliged to give in to her son. The strong will which had been an offshoot of her own proved too strong for her.

It must have taken long days and nights to make the trip, for the road mounts with every mile. The route

lay through upper King George, across the hilly country of Fauquier, on and up into the Blue Ridge. It was strange country for the traveler from the tidewater region. She had traveled far in her time, but never had she beheld anything like these gray crags and precipitous roads, these heights that were reached after hours of climbing, only to fall away breathlessly into great hollows edged by towering sharp blue peaks. Perpendicular roads, bottomless hollows, countless hills—it was like traveling slowly and wearily into a new world.

But if the traveler was not too worn out, her heart must have lifted when, at last, the top was reached, and she saw below her the Valley of the Shenandoah. There are few scenes on earth to equal that in loveliness —a revelation to the dweller in the lower lands or, indeed, to any one else; for the Potomac and the Rappahannock roll between low bluffs and level fields, but the Shenandoah goes by like a river in an old romance.

CHAPTER XVI

That trip up into the Valley was a stupendous undertaking for a woman of over seventy whose health was already precarious. The echo of it comes back in a fragment of an old letter that was rescued years afterward from the burning White House, a letter written in the spring of 1782 and referring almost with terror to the trip over the "Mountins". But she went through the trial with that intrepidity that marked her acceptance, after the first sharp struggle, of each difficult development of her long life. When the creaking carriage had made the last rocky mile she settled down in her common sense—and in who can say how much desolation of spirit—to endure the new exile. In her favorite book, the book of devotions bearing the signatures of Jane Washington and Mary Washington, there was a chapter headed, "A good method to entertain unstaple and troublous times." It may be that she wove that chapter, now, into the bitter experience of "refugeeing" in old age more than a hundred steep, stony miles from home.

War news reached Frederick county with far more

delay than it had reached Fredericksburg. She must have found an abundance of leisure, between posts, for long thought, for speculations as to how her sons were faring, particularly the one who was managing the war, and her grandsons; whether Betty Lewis would miss her daily advice; what might or might not be happening to Ferry Farm.

The summer of 1781 took its course slowly, as summers do for exiles, and after a while the mountain autumn began, with crisp days and cool nights and the earliest frost that she had ever known. The onset of October must have deepened her homesickness. It would seem that heart could scarcely ask for anything better than the glory of autumn in the Shenandoah Valley, with the Alleghanies afire to the west and the Blue Ridge smoking to the east; but it is safe to guess that Mary Washington's leal heart wished for more. She knew that leaves were turning on the bluffs above the Rappahannock ferry, too, and that there would not be many more falls in which she would watch them turn. To her inner vision every oak and ash of the home woodland stood up in separate beauty.

October was in its second lap when the slow post, climbing the hills to Frederick, brought great news. Washington had accomplished his mission at Yorktown. Cornwallis had surrendered, and the war was over.

The record runs that when Mary Washington received these tidings—they came straight from the victor of Yorktown himself—she cried out with clasped hands,

FIREPLACE IN KITCHEN OF FREDERICKSBURG COTTAGE. IT CONTAINS A CRANE THAT BELONGED TO MARY WASHINGTON

"Thank God the war is ended, and we shall be blessed with peace, happiness, and independence, for our country is free!" But there is a little too much rhetoric here for one who seldom spoke her strongest feelings and who was never at all given to balanced phrasing. No doubt she felt every word of the speech attributed to her, but the likelihood is that whatever she said, it came brokenly, as words of joy after long trial come with the very old.

Soon after that she took the trying trip down the hills to the lower country. Her homecoming was very quiet, for Fredericksburg's mind was not on an old lady refugee but on a stalwart hero who had saved the nation's cause and who in a way had been given to that cause by Fredericksburg itself. As she drove down Charles Street many hats were lifted, for the townsfolk always gave her special salutation, but the arrival at the cottage was rather inconspicuous. With some stiffness after the unspeakable journey she descended under the drifting maple leaves and stepped across the threshold of the little house that had passed for home during six strange and turbulent years.

Charles Street and all the other streets were loud with the name of her famous son. "Here is too much flattery," she might say, as she had said before, but inside her reticent old heart she was, as her neighbors had guessed, as proud as anybody—prouder, perhaps, if the truth could have been known—and just as good a new American. For though she was the granddaughter of loyalists and had grown up on the rights of kings, she was also a spir-

itual descendant of men who had haled King John into a green meadow one June morning when his claim to rights grew a little too lusty. So it did not take her very long to attain her proper perspective. After all, her whole growth had been in the direction of this very revolution. She had put out branches under the Stuarts and borne fruit under the Hanoverians, it is true, but her roots were in Runymede.

Now, no doubt, she felt eager and impatient to get over to the farm and make sure that no imp of Tarleton's breed had been up to mischief within her gates. There must have been tremendous content in driving slowly back up the familiar hill, a much more civilized hill than those outlandish steeps in the upper country, and rolling in stately authority along her own fields to run an appraising eye over rustling corn shocks and yellow stacks of hay. Her negroes fetched her water from the spring in the hollow and she drank to the ending of the war in a wordless toast. The ending of the war! At first it had been a mysterious affair, that war, but slowly the fog had lifted. And now the outcome was victory. The Lord of Hosts, with her own son as his able agent, had seen to that.

Fredericksburg could scarcely contain itself waiting for General Washington, but at last he came. It had been necessary for him to push on from Yorktown to an important Congress in Philadelphia, and almost immediately after that he was summoned to the bedside of John Custis. This was the Jacky who had given his

stepfather so much trouble by his dislike of learning and his love of green fruit. He lay dying, now, from a fever contracted in Yorktown, where he had done volunteer and unsalaried service as Washington's aide, and his failings were all forgotten.

A week later George Washington came home. It was the eleventh of November, in that memorable autumn, when he crossed the Rappahannock on the ancient ferry and rode up to the town. He came as he had never come before, with a retinue of French and American officers, and the place in a tumult to receive him. Dismounting at Kenmore, he went afoot to the house on Charles Street. Some men's mothers would have wished them to arrive in all their brave array, but this man knew his own. Inwardly she might look upon him as a hero, but when he returned to her in this great hour she wanted him to come only as her son. And that way he went.

George Custis describes the incident in stately numbers. "The lady was alone," he says, "her aged hands employed in the works of domestic industry." But Fredericksburg has a less stilted tale to tell. The account runs that a crowd of neighbors, undismayed by former experiences, had hurried joyfully to the house to apprise Madam Washington of her son's arrival in town when, before they could blurt out their news, an army orderly dashed up on horseback, saluted Mrs. Washington, and announced that his Excellency would soon be with her. The story goes that the old lady repeated "his Excellency" with an intonation perilously like a sniff, and

replied with measured distinctness that when George came she would be glad to see him. Fredericksburg forgave her for this, and so must we. She had spanked him so many, many times, we are to remember, and put so many patches in his trousers when he rode horseback too hard, and so often had had to compel him to wash behind his ears!

And after all, on this occasion, her pride did get the better of her. For in the tag-end of the tale she turns briskly to her little wide-eyed negro maid and says sternly: "Patsy, bring me a clean white apron."

Custis comments, "Not a word of his glory." No, not a word. But the tribute of a clean white apron may serve with some simple, forthright natures, as an adequate acknowledgment of glory. And Mary Ball Washington must be allowed to pay tribute to her own son in her own obstinate way.

Up on the Potomac old Sir Thomas Fairfax,—he who had singled the General out in his youth as good material for fame and had followed his course with watchful eagerness,—poor old Sir Thomas found it impossible to rise to the occasion. When the word from Yorktown reached him he turned wearily to his colored servant: "Come and carry me to bed, now, Joe; it is time for me to die."

No one in Fredericksburg said any such thing, however. There was no talk of dying, or even of going to bed. On the contrary, excessively lively, the rejoicers sat up all night. Prevented only by the width of the Rappa-

hannock from being a part of the Northern Neck, the little metropolis considered itself fully entitled to the honor of having produced George Washington, and it proceeded accordingly. The Indian Queen was polished up, to the last plank in the floor and to the top crystal in the chandeliers, for a tremendous Peace Ball. The pinch of wartimes quickly forgotten, down in the big kitchen enormous preparations for the feast began. In every house evening dresses and velvet suits were furbished up and silver buckles were shined.

A special and well-chosen committee repaired to the cottage on Charles Street with an urgent request that Mrs. Washington would honor the occasion with her presence. The invitation was probably couched in simple language, for by this time, surely, they had learned that she did not care for frills. Anyway, they asked her, and she accepted. It was doubtless a trial to her, for lindsey-woolsey is far more comfortable than stiff black satin; but she put her reluctance into her capacious pocket and said that she would go. Her dancing days were well over, the acceptance ran, but she would be glad to contribute to the general happiness. So Little Bet and the pop-eyed Patsy set to work to get her ready, their part in the Peace Ball humble but no doubt strenuous.

Washington himself was an immeasurably weary man. After the meeting with his mother he took his way to Kenmore, always a haven. He had helped Fielding Lewis build that house. The stucco mantel in the beautiful drawing-room, decorated with scenes from Aesop's

Fables, is said to have been his own choice of design. An unfailing welcome waited him in that home, he knew. It is told to this day in homes not far from Kenmore—and stories struck in the white heat of those tremendous hours keep the stamp of authenticity—that Betty Lewis was absent when he got there, and that on her return an hour later she found him in her own room, face down on the bed, fast asleep full-length in his best regimentals.

While he slept the preparations for the Peace Ball went on apace. On the night of the celebration Mrs. Washington entered the room on General Washington's arm. The French officers, it is said, were astonished at the plainness of her attire. To their way of thinking, velvet and jewels would have been in order for the august occasion. But they reckoned without the mother of their host. She moved down the room beside her tall son with a dignity to which diamonds could have added nothing. More than one spectator must have thrilled at the significance of the sight; here in their midst was the man whose greatness had made a nation, and here also was the woman who had, largely speaking, made the man. The Indian Queen rocked with applause.

A day or two more of festivity, and then General Washington had to bid Fredericksburg good-bye, for there are hard and sober duties to be done in the wake of a full-sized war, and those who fight hardest are those who must work hardest when the fighting is over. The candles of three nights' burning flickered to their sockets, and the last reveler drew a long breath. The cap-

tains and the conqueror of kings departed. Mary Ball Washington, no little fatigued, far from well, but resolute still, folded away her party dress into her old trunk and drove over the river to see the last crops in before winter should fall.

It was too late, now, to go back to Ferry Farm for good. At well past threescore and ten changing homes is not to be lightly undertaken, even though the distance is only a mile. She was still homesick, but there was no strength left in her for another tent-striking. So she stayed on in the little adopted house. As long as she lived the back yard there would be full of flowers and fruit trees that would need attention, vines to be trained, box hedges to be clipped. She could still get to her home farm, even though only once in a while. Old Stephen had been gathered to his black fathers, but the man George or the boy Tom could drive in his stead. Even when she could not go herself, one of them could fetch home the demijohn of life-giving water. And however much her sight failed she could keep on knitting. Best of all, she knew by heart portions of Sir Matthew Hale and much of the Bible—a well-worn volume for which she had made a cover of buff and blue homespun, the Continental colors.

Neighbors and relatives dropped in from time to time, but many ties were breaking. Not long before the end of the war she had lost her second son, Samuel. He had never proved a signal success, this Samuel, being incurably given to marrying and to running into debt. But he

had been born in the years of her early happiness at Pope's Creek, and he was a lovable fellow with a talent for music. This was the first of her children to go since the early death of little Mildred soon after the family moved down from the Potomac farm.

There is something peculiarly tragic in that reversal of the natural processes that takes away from an aged woman a son who has hardly passed his prime. Having brought him into the world and helped him a good way along through it, she might be spared, to our mortal way of thinking, having to see him leave it. But aged mothers bear this somehow; Mary Washington, with her unusual powers of endurance, may have borne it better than most.

In the year after the surrender a new blow fell; she lost one who was almost as dear to her as any son. Fielding Lewis, patriot, his tremendous task over, died in January. He had given to the cause of the Revolution not only his sons, his time, and his strength, but all his possessions, and he died heavily in debt. The country has raised no monument to Fielding Lewis, but he stands in the front rank of the men who gave their lives for her.

His wife—she had her mother's intrepidity and her brother's initiative—must make her own living now, and at once she set about turning Kenmore into a boarding school. Some step like that must be taken, or the home would be sold over her head. Eventually it was; but meantime she stayed on near her mother. There must have been innumerable anxious conferences over

the hard question, and much going backward and forward on the brick walk. For a while, anyway, the scheme went well, and the daughters of gentlemen studied their French and,—it is to be hoped,—their spelling under the fox-and-grapes tiles in the stately drawing-room.

At the other end of the walk Mrs. Washington went on with what had become at last the strangely difficult task of living. Her son invited her to come and make her home at Mount Vernon, but she could not bring herself to think of another move. By this time she was in very poor circumstances. It is more than probable that in her obstinate love for Ferry Farm she had sunk most of her money in its river soil. At any rate, the Virginia legislature, hearing that she was in need, set about making an appropriation for her. Washington was horrified. He wrote to her at once, saying with some sternness that she should have known he would share his last coin with her. This was true, and she must indeed have known it, but perhaps she had a sort of stubborn pride about taking so much help from him. However that may be, the pension was nipped in the bud; nor did she suffer any severe poverty after that, only a good deal of bodily pain and ever increasing loneliness.

Whatever else might fail there was not any falling off in her hospitality; no Virginia homemaker gives that up except with her last gasp. She always had enough in the cottage cupboard to be shared with callers. There is a Fredericksburg woman who cherishes today her great-grandmother's imperishable recollection of going, as a

small girl, for an afternoon call at the Charles Street house and being served tea and cake by Madam Washington. The hostess was severe in the matter of crumbs. When the little girl had come to the end of her repast—"Now gather up your skirts, my child, and go carefully out to the back door and shake them there."

The old lady possessed flocks of descendants by this time. Betty had reared a large household, Samuel had left five children, and there were many others, with great-grand-children into the bargain. It was hard to see them clearly, but Mrs. Washington managed to keep track of them. She always kept track of them. One of the Kenmore boys testified in later years that there were no Scripture stories to equal those she picked for telling on Sunday afternoons in the cottage. No doubt the audience had to look to their p's and q's during the telling, but they continued to go back for more. And the one who remembered best said that his grandmother always finished with a look of peace on her stern old face.

CHAPTER XVII

The buff-and-blue Bible saw much service during the next few years, though, more and more as time passed, the words ran together on the pages. There was one verse about a sparrow alone upon a housetop and another about a pelican by himself in the wilderness, and no keenness of eyesight was needed to make their significance plain. But she found other verses, too, more comforting and just as plain. Changes were rife everywhere in the land as thick as seventeen-year locusts; still, though, the returning seasons brought their old beauty—dawns and sunsets were full of loveliness even in town, and the box beside the brick walk freshened with every April, and the perennials massed faithfully each summer in their vivid, comforting color. For those who live close to nature no change can bring utter desolation.

John Augustine, the third of the four Washington brothers, died six years after the end of the long war in which he had served. He was the "dear Johnne" of that sad letter about the corn famine. Mrs. Washington had borne six children,—only half of the number was left,

now: Betty Lewis, struggling unsuccessfully with her changed lot, Charles who lived far away, and the famous firstborn. Toward the end of her life the mother was overcome by a desire to get in close touch again with the two sons who were no longer near her—that is, with Charles, who lived in northwestern Virginia, and with the widow and children of Samuel. So once again she took the long drive into the mountains. It seems incredible that a woman of her age and in her enfeebled condition should have survived such a journey. But this woman was all mother. A stern one, perhaps, and autocratic at times, and somewhat hard—but after all and in spite of all, intensely maternal. She did not look to large, far issues, nor did she know how to deal with subtleties and potentialities; her business, from first to last, was the old, elemental business of bearing and rearing. The sod, the hearth, the young that she had brought into the world, those were the trusts committed to her, and according to her best lights she was faithful to them.

Now and then General Washington returned to "the place of his growing infancy" as he had termed Fredericksburg in his Peace Ball address. He was installed at Mount Vernon, now,—he hoped for the rest of his days,—following that bent inherited straight from his mother, intent preoccupation with the old earth and her revelations. His diary is full of it all—with the planting of linden trees in March, (perhaps in memory of the giant at Ferry Farm), and of ash trees and black haws and berried thorns and pawpaws; wild honeysuckle in

April, and wild-rose hedges, and honey locusts. One entry reads: "Removed two pretty large and full-grown Lilacs to the No. Garden gate taking up as much dirt with the roots as could well be obtained," and another, "Found what is called the Spice bush (a fragrant aromatic shrub) in bloom. . . . The Sassafras not yet full out, nor the Redbud. . . . Dogwood blossom still enclosed in the button."

That was what his mother yearned to hear when he came down to Fredericksburg. If the dogwood blossom was late at Mount Vernon it was probably late at Ferry Farm—still enclosed in its small green button; and the sassafras, too, and the redbud. And she wanted to know how the filberts were faring that Betty Lewis had given him for planting, and to show him her own grapes and box. Perhaps the two spent now in these last years the happiest hours they had ever known together. She could not discuss affairs of State, and he was ignorant of the science of housekeeping and the art of bringing up babies; but they were both intimate with slips and seeds and with the feel of cool wet earth clinging to old roots and with the delicate ways of lilacs transplanted in February. It was their one great and indissoluble bond.

The townsfolk were eager to see him and take his hand. Now and then there was almost too much eagerness over him. Once when he attended services at St. George's such a crowd gathered inside that the north gallery swayed. The result was a panic that severely shook the place of his "growing infancy." But it did not

shake his popularity, though in future the north gallery may have been more scantily occupied. Washington with grave naïvete notes the incident in his journal, apparently unaware of what caused the overcrowding.

All the years that followed the war were heavy and painful years for Mary Washington. A relentless disease had fastened on her, and under it her naturally fine constitution, though fortified by a lifetime out in the sun and air, slowly gave way. One after another the ties that she had known were breaking. "An old almanack out of date" she had called herself, with that startling mixture of truth and imagery into which, under pressure of reality, the most practical-minded sometimes lapse. No poet could have hit on a better simile. The tides and moons and changing seasons which had so long represented existence for her were growing into ancient history now. She had lived sturdily and tried hard, but the last of her pages would soon be turned.

If she managed to creep out to her high-perched rock in those feeble years, she must have sat there for long hours at a time with many recollections shifting through her mind. It is one of life's mysteries and mercies that in the final loneliness of old age fair pictures which had faded out like pale ink slowly clear and sharpen again, and take on color, until they stand even fairer than they stood at first. She caught again faintly perhaps half-scenes at Epping Forest, and remembered unimportant pictures from Northumberland and Westmoreland—a room at her stepfather's house, the look of Bonhum's

Creek under a film of autumn ice. Many a Sunday morning at Yeocomico church must have come faltering back.

All the familiar places had changed, now, and she knew it. Old Yeocomico was beginning to go to ruin. Bewdley was still standing, where she had taken General Washington, swathed in blankets, for the first outing of his life; but many another of the stately homes had burned to the ground or passed into strange hands. Her sisters and first cousins—they were all so much older than herself—had died, and many of her contemporaries. Even the memory of George Eskridge was fading now. Sir Matthew Hale's poem had counselled the heart how to meet change, but for her part, she had outlived nearly all the changes that could come to her.

In the sixth year after the war she and her daughter were desperately ill at the same time. Washington noted in his journal under the date April 26: "Receiving an express between four and five o'clock in the afternoon informing me of the extreme illness of my Mother and Sister Lewis, I resolved to set out by daylight in the morning." He reached Fredericksburg the next day and found both out of danger, though his mother appeared to him so emaciated and outworn that he had little hope of her recovery.

But eighty years of wind and sunshine were standing her in good stead now. Her old friend, Dr. Mortimer, visited her constantly; Little Bet and Patsy were faithful; and before long she was out in her back yard again. Early in the following year her daughter-in-law came

down from Mount Vernon to call on her. Washington's journal says: "Alighted at my Mother's and sent the carriage and horses to my Sister Lewis's, where we dined and lodged." That little cottage sits on the corner today with a simple and meditative air; no one would ever guess from its mild manner that one summer morning the Mount Vernon coach pulled up before its door and let George Washington descend. But the old windows could swear with veracity that that is what happened.

It was high time now to look to the matter of making a will, and Mary Washington was not one to defer so obvious a duty. She had no great amount to dispose of, but one day she called in a few witnesses and put on paper her wishes concerning what she had. The language of this last will and testament is much the same that Mary Hewes had employed nearly seventy years before, and the two documents are singularly alike, each devising the lion's share to one specially beloved child, each willing away a few slaves and listing with patient detail a somewhat meagre collection of personal property.

It may be true that relations between the mother and her eldest son were somewhat strained at times. That kind of rumor can never, by its very nature, be proven one way or the other. What can be proved is the fact that he was uppermost in her last thoughts. She had thwarted his boyish ambition to roam the seas, but at the end she left to him her most treasured possession, a few acres of the Virginia earth that they both loved with utter passion.

In the name of God! Amen. I, Mary Washington, of Fredericksburg, in the County of Spotsylvania, being in good health, but calling to mind the uncertainty of this life, and willing to dispose of what remains of my worldly estate, do make and publish this, my last will, recommending my soul in the hands of my Creator, hoping for a remission of all my sins through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of mankind; I dispose of my worldly estate as follows:

Imprimis.—I give to my son, General George Washington, all my land in Accokeek Run, in the County of Stafford, and also my negro boy George, to him and his heirs forever. Also my best bed, bedstead, and Virginia cloth curtains (the same that stand in my best bedroom), my quilted blue-and-white quilt, and my best dressing glass.

Item.—I give and devise to my son, Charles Washington, my negro man, Tom, to him and his assigns forever.

Item.—I give and devise to my daughter, Betty Lewis, my phaeton and my bay horse.

Item.—I give and devise to my daughter-in-law, Hannah Washington, my purple cloth cloak lined with shag.

Item.—I give and devise to my grandson, Corbin Washington, my negro wench, old Bet, my riding chair, and two black horses, to him and his assigns forever.

Item.—I give and devise to my grandson, Fielding Lewis, my negro man, Frederick, to him and his assigns forever; also eight silver tablespoons, half of my crockery ware and the blue and white tea china, with book case, oval table, one bedstead, one pair sheets, one pair blankets and white cotton counterpane, two table cloths, six red leather chairs, half my pewter and one-half of my iron kitchen furniture.

Item.—I give and devise to my grandson, Lawrence Lewis, my negro wench, Lydia, to him and his assigns forever.

Item.—I give and devise to my granddaughter, Bettie Carter,

my negro woman, little Bet, and her future increase, to her and her assigns forever; also my largest looking glass, my walnut writing desk with drawers, a square dining table, one bed, bedstead, bolster, one pillow, one blanket and pair of sheets, white Virginia cloth counterpane and purple curtains, my red-and-white tea china, teaspoons, and the other half of my pewter, crockery ware, and the remainder of my iron kitchen furniture.

Item.—I give to my grandson, George Washington, my next best dressing glass, one bed, bedstead, bolster, one pillow, one pair sheets, one blanket and counterpane.

Item.—I devise all my wearing apparel to be equally divided between my granddaughters, Betty Carter, Fannie Ball, and Milly Washington; but should my daughter, Betty Lewis, fancy any one, two or three articles, she is to have them before a division thereof.

Lastly. I nominate and appoint my said son, General George Washington, executor of this, my will, and as I owe few or no debts, I direct my executor to give no security nor to appraise my estate, but desire the same may be allotted to my devisees, with as little trouble and delay as may be, desiring their acceptance thereof as all the token I now have to give them of my love for them.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and seal this 20th day of May, 1788.

MARY WASHINGTON.

Witness, John Ferneyhough.

Signed, sealed and published in our presence, and signed by us in the presence of the said Mary Washington, and at her desire.

J. Mercer
Joseph Walker

One morning in the spring of 1789 this eldest son rode down to Fredericksburg accompanied only by a favorite

servant. Word had just reached him that he had been chosen as the first President of the new Republic. This was the greatest glory that had yet come to him. With the arrival of the announcement he found himself instantly facing countless duties and readjustments and tremendous new responsibilities. But as by a sort of instinct he turned and made straight for his mother's home.

He was received in the large corner room where she was now a prisoner from weakness. It was their last interview, and both of them knew it by premonition. There has been more than one sentimental description of this final scene. But neither of the only persons who had a part in it was sentimental, or even emotional. If they were true to their natures, and their stuff was not the stuff to change easily, they faced the hour with the calm and reticence that had always characterized them both. Then, after a while, she blessed him, as always she ended by doing, and he rode away.

His ride took him northward over the long Alexandria road and across the numerous far flung Potomac creeks by that same route that he had traveled the first time of all with his mother,—one long-ago, well-nigh forgotten day in a rumbling carriage on its way to Epsiwassen. He had been a fretful three-year-old then, and she a young woman in the prime of love and life. Now his star had reached its highest point, and hers was setting. But there was no time to halt at the old places where they had halted over fifty years before. He must push on

as fast as he could for New York, where multitudes would soon be awaiting him.

Mary Washington lived to hear the ringing echoes of the First Inauguration. Then, in late August, when once again Ferry Farm took on a tinge of impending color, and the Rappahannock went by faintly bright, she died. Washington had been dangerously ill through much of the summer, and now, still weak and overwhelmed with the burdens of his new office, he could not come to her. But death's power is limited, even in its strongest hour. Almost the last words that she uttered had to do with her best loved son: "I want only to hear from his own hand that he is well."

She had chosen the spot where she wished her grave to be—close beside the rock on the high bluff. And she lies there, under a tall straight shaft of utter simplicity. The Virginia paper of September third carried at the bottom of its fourth page a little notice lightly boxed with black: "On Tuesday afternoon, at her seat, near Fredericksburg, departed this life, in a very advanced age, Mrs. Washington, the Mother of our Beloved President. This venerable lady lived to experience the exquisite and singular felicity of seeing her Illustrious Son and Pupil raised to the highest honours which a grateful people could bestow upon the darling object of their affections."

The obituary was headed, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace!" The line seems well chosen—familiar words from the *Nunc Dimittis* that she had

LAFAYETTE WALK LEADING FROM MARY WASHINGTON'S COTTAGE TO KENMORE. WASHINGTON PLANTED THE BOX BORDER. THE SMALL BUILDING IS THE KITCHEN

sung many a time in her clear girl's voice at evening prayer in old Yeocomico, and applicable, also, for she had gone out trustfully, in a quiet time of the year, and in the knowledge that her country was calm at last and her son safe.

Her going had been most simple, as she would have chosen for it to be, just as simple as her coming into the world that fall day down at Epping Forest eighty-two years before. She loved plain, unpretentious ways of doing things. Every one who knew her knew that, and there was a famous officer of the Revolution who bore eloquent testimony to it in after years when people spoke of her. Layfayette, champion of American freedom, had made a pilgrimage to Fredericksburg, one day before he sailed away, for the express purpose of paying his courtesies to the mother of General Washington. Little Robert Lewis of Kenmore showed him the way to the cottage, and he, too, told the story afterward.

Mrs. Washington was in the back yard working. She had on a rough dark dress and a broad-brimmed hat, the strings tied under her chin, and she was busily raking up autumn leaves.

"There, sir," the boy said, halting at a little distance, "is my grandmother."

It would have been easy enough to run ahead with word that the illustrious guest was coming, and Robert Lewis should have been ashamed of himself for his informality. But perhaps, with the wisdom of the very young, he knew that he could count on his grandmother.

She was not in the least disconcerted. Straightening up stiffly and shifting the hoe to her left hand, she extended the other hand and received with perfect grace the French aristocrat's kiss on her fingers. Then she led the way into the house for gingerbread and mint julep.

"You see an old woman, Marquis de Lafayette," she said, as she moved up the worn walk edged with box, "but I can give you welcome without the parade of changing my dress."

And even after all these years it would seem that her rugged honesty and simple naturalness are best presented without change of any kind.

NOTE AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

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